# The Use and Meaning of Mobile Phones in Student Lives

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# Abstract

This thesis demonstrates the popularity of mobile telephony within a population of undergraduate students, and provides explanations regarding the adoption, use and meaning of mobile phones therein. Research has been conducted at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne amongst 1030 18-24 year old, full-time, UK-resident 'traditional-entry' students, using social science methods. Due to a lack of existing research on this type of population, the thesis also includes ethnographic data from the everyday lives of the individuals concerned. This data in turn supports the main findings of the research. Although some theorists conceptualise the mobile phone as 'impacting' on social life, this research adopts a 'social shaping' approach from work in social studies of technology, and is also informed by social anthropology. This theoretical basis helps formulate the argument that changes engendered by the mobile phone must be viewed in association with other recent changes within the University and its population. Correspondingly, the thesis suggests that the mobile phone is now integral to what Haselgrove (1994) terms the 'student experience', precisely because of the nature of this experience for the contemporary undergraduate population. The thesis therefore provides an explanation of the adoption rates, use patterns and meanings associated with mobile phones within the undergraduate population at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, *in conjunction* with a study of their behaviours and attitudes. It concludes that the use and meaning of mobile phones in student lives is directly linked to the specific circumstances of the population studied.

# Table of Contents

## Chapter 9: Project Overview and Future Research

# Table of Figures

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# Chapter One: Setting the Scene

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the areas that will be covered by subsequent chapters in the thesis, and the structure and content of those chapters. It provides a guide to learning about the framework and findings of the research project, 'The Use and Meaning of Mobile Phones in Student Lives'. These are presented in the format of a conventional PhD thesis structure (see Table of Contents), presenting the literature review, theoretical framework and methodological discussion prior to presenting results and discussing them in the wider context. (An evaluation of this narrative device is found in Chapter 3). The thesis chronology is described below in Section 1.2, 'Thesis Structure'.

This first chapter also provides a summary of the areas considered within the other chapters. It identifies the key features, providing the reader with additional guidance to following the story of the research process. It introduces elements further explored within the main body of the thesis, such as methodological considerations, other research in the field, and the themes and findings produced by the research project described within this thesis. These can be found in Section 1.3, 'Thesis Content'.

Finally, in Section 1.4, 'Thesis Summary', the chapter draws together elements from the subsequent 8 chapters, forming a brief synopsis of the research process.

## 1.2 Thesis Structure

The main body of the thesis commences with Chapter 2, 'A Review of Existing Approaches within the Field'. This chapter assesses prior research both on telephony, and on university students. It focuses in particular on publications key to the field and the theoretical development of the thesis, which have contributed to the research design and analytical process in important ways. The chapter identifies substantial gaps in research on students and research on mobile phones, whilst using elements of existing research in the wider field to help provide a theoretical and practical context for

understanding the topic. Chapter 2 concludes by describing the theoretical framework used to approach the research.

Chapter 3, 'Research: Theory and Practice', introduces a reflexive element to the thesis, both in its assessment of the research process, and its awareness of the writing process. Firstly, it spends some time in discussing the theoretical influences that have - over the duration of the project, and specifically in light of the data produced - changed, developed, and solidified. It then shifts its focus to the choice, implementation and evaluation of the research methods used in the project. Finally, it foreshadows Chapter 9, 'Project Overview and Future Research', by suggesting possible improvements to the research process that might benefit future study.

Chapter 4, 'A Social History of Telephony in the UK', uses findings from some of the literature introduced in Chapter 2 to create a socio-historical background of telephony within the UK. This provides the reader with an understanding of the development of telephony and the uses to which it has been put.

Chapter 5, 'A Social History of English Universities', fills one of the research gaps identified by Chapter 2 by providing an extensive, contextual account of the university as an institution, and the lives of university students in historical and cultural context. The social history of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne[1] receives particular attention. The chapter demonstrates the changing nature of the university sector in England, and its relation to the wider social context in the UK, areas which prove crucial when discussing data on contemporary student behaviours (including mobile phone use).

Chapter 6, 'Student Life at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne', provides ethnographic detail on the population studied. This data is crucial to the thesis as a whole. Student use of mobile phones is later shown to be directly related to the daily enactment of undergraduate lives at the University. Data regarding how students use mobile phones could not be fully understood without this provision of context.

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[1] The University of Newcastle upon Tyne will also be referred to throughout the thesis in the abbreviated forms of 'Newcastle University', 'Newcastle', and '(the) University', as frequently used by undergraduates.

Chapter 7, 'Students and Mobile Phones', focuses in detail on the adoption, use and meaning of mobile phones within student lives at the University of Newcastle, using data from survey, interviews and observation. This data provides a wealth of information, but not necessarily a wealth of meaning. Its findings are more fully understood in conjunction with data from Chapters 2, 4, 5 and particularly 6, to gain a rounded understanding of the topic.

This is what Chapter 8, 'Exploration and Interpretation', seeks to provide. It takes key findings from Chapter 7, and links them to their role in specific areas of student life. It is made clear that without thorough knowledge of the daily lives of undergraduates, it would be difficult to make sense of their communicative behaviours. The chapter also proceeds to link these findings with existing research, particularly that on teenagers' usage of mobile phones, to reiterate the important differences between the use of mobiles by students, and of the UK population as a whole. The chapter concludes that students use and conceptualise mobile phones in highly specific ways, due to the very specific roles that they enact at the University of Newcastle.

Chapter 9, 'Project Overview and Future Research', displays the key findings as presented in Chapter 8, summarising them and strengthening them by referring back to previous chapters in the thesis. It provides a reflexive overview of the project, highlighting key aspects within the process, and how things may be improved if a subsequent study was conducted. Finally, it suggests areas for further research in similar areas.

## 1.3 Thesis Content

When this project commenced, no other study of UK university students and mobile phones was available for reference, but it was thought that existing research on telephony and the lives of young people might provide an adequate research background for the study. It soon became apparent, however, that this was not the case. As Chapter 3 explains in more depth, the decision regarding which parameters to use stems from a particular lack of research on full-time undergraduates, coupled with the specific behaviours and attitudes that they demonstrate, and which are seen as influential in the way that they use and understand mobile phones. This thesis, therefore, provides an investigation of the lives of the population of full-time, UK-

resident undergraduate students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne between the ages of 18 and 24, and the role of mobile telephony in these lives.

Within the fields of sociology and social anthropology (which are not, according to this thesis, mutually exclusive), studies of science and technology have proved increasingly popular in recent years. Anthropology, in particular, has historically paid attention to the role of the material within culture, and is now keen to explore 'new' technologies such as assisted reproduction, and the Internet (Edwards *et al.* 1993; Miller and Slater 2000). As 'technology', and specifically 'information and communication technologies' ('ICTs'), are viewed as of increasing social importance in the media and by cultural commentators, it might be assumed that academics have seized on mobile telephony as an area of study. Instead, it is the Internet which has been the subject of focus, with considerably less interest paid to the mobile phone.

Similarly, attempts to understand young people by social scientists are more visible than ever, with additions to, and explorations of, the canons of 'youth studies', 'youth culture' and 'popular culture'. At a time when the UK's university system is undergoing change, it seems pertinent that university students, and undergraduates in particular, would be the focus of academic scrutiny. Inexplicably, however, they are rarely a focus of study in their own right. Instead, the role of the university as institution is a more usual focus of study, with specific attention paid to admission rates and examination results, rather than the daily behaviours of staff or students.

This thesis, therefore, presents findings from two under-researched areas in the UK – mobile telephony, and student lives. An anthropological approach, informed by existing social studies of technology ('SST'), has produced rich ethnographic data concerning the daily lives of undergraduate students at the University of Newcastle (see Chapter 6), and the role of the mobile phone within these lives. It has revealed that thorough examination of the lived context of the population studied is essential in understanding the use and meaning of mobile telephony, which in turn illuminates key aspects of contemporary undergraduate life.

The embryonic array of 'mobile phone studies' in the social sciences contains a haphazard assortment of publications that are difficult to view as a coherent whole. Chapter 2 reviews existing studies of telephony both in the UK and further afield. Interestingly, few of these existing studies refer to existing research in social studies of

technology and the anthropology of science and technology. These schools of thought have been found to be more useful than the telephony research in constructing a theoretical framework for this project. The merits or otherwise of existing approaches in the field are fully assessed in Chapter 2 to form part of the theoretical grounding for the thesis, with the mutual shaping process observed between individuals and technology found to provide the most useful starting point.

As an anthropological study, the project also considers it of theoretical importance that the general behaviours of the population are studied in context, to assist in the analysis of the mobile phone's role in student lives. This ethnographic approach is coupled with the application of anthropological thought when investigating aspects such as symbolism, ordering and the transitional nature of student life. Debates exist regarding the pros and cons of quantitative and qualitative methods (see Chapter 3); this study employed a combination of these. A survey was conducted, and provided both contextual background to a large undergraduate population, and a wealth of data for statistical analysis. Interviews and observation enabled further in-depth analysis of student lives and behaviours, as well as their relationship with mobile phones, providing an ethnographic picture of undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle as presented in Chapter 6. The main findings in terms of telephony are the focus of Chapter 7, which are continually related back to the contextual data of student lives, past and present, in Chapter 8, in an attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the use and meaning of mobile phones in relation to the population studied.

Existing telephony research provided an understanding of the adoption, use and meaning of telephony in the UK over time, as shown in Chapter 4. This chapter describes the role of telephony in UK society from its introduction in 1876 to the present day, including the increasing popularity of mobile telephony. The historical uses and meaning associated with telephony are explored. Again, the changes in the importance of telephony, especially to young people, contribute to an enhanced understanding of why and how students use mobile phones today.

In the absence of previous research on the topic chosen, a part of the thesis was devoted to learning about life at the University over time, to gain a thorough understanding of undergraduate students, their behaviours, and the institutions that they occupy. This also serves to provide a necessary contrast between contemporary and historical representations of student life, and highlights the changing role of

students in relation to 'youth' and society in general over time. Chapter 5 therefore sketches an historical overview, providing a chronological description of the emergence of 'the student experience' and the 'Redbrick' university.

Chapter 6 presents, in detail, ethnographic data gathered during the project, which explores all aspects of student lives including: study; work; leisure; the student home; and the parental home. These elements later prove crucial in the way mobile phone use by the population studied, is understood. Chapter 7 includes data regarding the purchase, ownership, uses and meanings of mobile phones within the population studied. This data is contextualised with other elements of the thesis in Chapter 8. The main conclusion drawn from the findings is that the high level of importance of mobile telephony for students is directly related to the specific nature of undergraduate life at Newcastle at this time. How this occurs is explored in more detail in that chapter, and summarised in Section 1.4 below.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 9. This is a 'Project Overview', which provides a summary of the main conclusions before recommending areas for future research, and suggesting any improvements that might have benefited the project when in progress.

## 1.4 Thesis Summary

The mobile phone has rapidly become an ordinary part of UK society. Under-researched within the social sciences, a technology whose reputation as a business tool or status symbol was formerly derided by undergraduates, it is now arguably the most important artefact in their daily lives. This not only invites the question 'Why?', but also presents a challenge in gaining understanding of a recently popular artefact, whose use by university students has not previously been the focus of in-depth academic attention.

This thesis provides a thorough assessment of the use and meaning of mobile phones within student lives at the University of Newcastle, arguing that when talking about telecommunications it is not possible to understand the uses and applications of technology by merely studying the uses and applications of that said technology within a population. A deeper understanding is required. This thesis demonstrates that when studying communications in the social world – whether they are wired, wireless,

public, private, involving speech or text - it is first necessary to comprehend the ordinary, day to day behaviours of the user.

Answers regarding use and meaning are thus visible via the following in-depth social science examination of exactly what student life today is all about, how it contrasts with student life in the past, and why mobile telephony is so popular in contemporary undergraduate life (at one university in the North East of England). It draws a distinction between the behaviours, communicative and otherwise, of students and others regarded as 'young people' or 'youth', concurrently acknowledging that the boundaries between these areas are being eroded as student lifestyles change. Student life is presented by the thesis as a transitional stage between dependence and independence, which relies on belonging to a community. Within the Newcastle population, participation in a student or family group is mediated and negotiated by mobile telephony. Whilst it is possible to enrol at the University and not have a mobile phone, it is increasingly a part of what *being a student* is about according to contemporary students themselves.

Within the University of Newcastle there are various official and unofficial behaviours connected with becoming and being a student. The mobile phone fulfils a role in many of these behaviours. It provides connection to the home environment, enabling a supported transition to independence for the student; it helps order and organise socialising and other aspects; it is an integral part of the changed and changing nature of student life today. In a short space of time the mobile phone has found a role in the main aspects of student life observed within the undergraduate population. In turn, some of these aspects have undergone subtle transformation, partly due to the enabling properties of mobile telephony. Student life at the beginning of the twenty-first century reveals changing experiences of higher education. Mobile telephony highlights this in terms of being an undergraduate at Newcastle University.

The thesis will also demonstrate that students do, contrary to expectation, have a real 'need' for mobile phone use, and do not adopt and use it according only to aesthetic or 'symbolic' rules. The expectations and behaviours of students today reveal the mobile phone to be an ideal tool to support various aspects of their lives. 'Need' may be a relative concept, but in terms of functional, practical reasons, the undergraduate population at Newcastle University state themselves that they do not know how they coped before the advent of mobile telephony.

Mobile telephony allows the population studied to do things most members of UK society take for granted – to chat to family and friends on a regular basis, to maintain intimate relationships, to arrange employment, to participate in social events. Mobile telephony allows telecommunication flow in and out of one's domestic residence, and in and out of the areas where one spends the majority of the working day. As a transhumant and transient population, students use mobile phones in a way that benefits their mobile nature, allowing them to chat or make arrangements in transit, which is where they spend much of their time. Coupled with the wider context of change influencing student intake and demographics, the mobile phone is both part of and represents the changing nature of the undergraduate population at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Students therefore illuminate key areas of mobile telephony – reasons for its adoption, use and meaning – that play an important role in their lives.

Within the thesis, these findings are informed by social theory from social studies of technology, and the discipline of social anthropology. Recent work in SST focuses not on the one-way impact of the introduction of a technology into a population, but explores connections within and between technology and the user on several different levels (see Chapter 2). Similarly, ethnographic research allows social exploration of a population, its behaviours and rituals and the importance of an artefact within this setting, always stressing the importance of context. Research to date on mobile telephony has not generally been informed by existing theory in these areas, and thus the research fills a gap in the research of mobile telephony in general, as well as providing original research regarding the relationship between students and mobile telephony.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the main elements of the thesis and a guide to how they are structured within it. It has provided the reader with a way of following the research narrative, coupled with an introduction to the concepts within, and information about where to find in-depth exploration of them. The chapter has summarised the gaps in knowledge identified during the research process, the research methods used, the theoretical background and development, and the provision of historical and anthropological data. It has set the scene both in terms of the thesis structure, and the research project itself.

The next chapter is Chapter 2, *A Review of Existing Approaches within the Field,* which reviews the related literature and its involvement in the formulation of the theoretical framework used within the thesis.

# Chapter 2 : A Review of Existing Approaches within the Field

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses existing approaches within the field, providing background information for the reader, and demonstrating the evolution of the theoretical framework applied to the thesis. It introduces the key authors and concepts in the following areas, which provide both a contextual setting and theoretical framework for the research project: telephony studies; research on students and youth; social studies of science and technology; and social anthropology. The review reveals the lack of empirical social science research on both telephony and university students, and the corresponding absence of coherent theoretical approaches within these domains. It thus demonstrates that the chosen research area will fill an important gap both in studies of telephony and undergraduate lives, as well as providing original research on how the two interrelate. The chapter concludes with an outlining of the theories that contribute to the formulation of an analytical framework for the thesis. (The evolution of this framework is further commented on in the next chapter, 'Research: Theory and Practice', in conjunction with an assessment of the practical methods used in the study.)

## 2.2 Social Studies of Telephony

This section introduces research that has been conducted on both wired and wireless telephony within the social sciences[1]. It critically assesses the lack of theoretical coherence and empirical data within this field. The necessity of conducting research on students and mobile phones[2] is clearly demonstrated.

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[1] To elaborate on these terms, 'wired' or 'fixed line' telephone refers to the type of telephone used during the 20th century before the introduction of 'mobile', 'cellular' or 'wireless' telephony during the 1980s.

[2] The thesis will use the common abbreviation 'phone' to stand for 'telephone' at certain times.

Compared to the television (Williams 1974, Silverstone 1994), computers and the Internet (Turkle 1985, Stone 1996) and even the microwave (Cockburn and Ormrod 1993), telephony remains an under-studied technology; a "neglected medium" (Fielding and Hartley 1987). The *mobile* phone is a relatively new social artefact, and thus the lack of coherent and convincing approaches to its social study can be more easily accepted. Fixed line telephony has operated in the UK since 1876, yet there is an equivalent paucity of social science literature surrounding its usage and meaning. Various excuses have been made to account for the lack of attention paid to these artefacts, such as its association with women rendering it 'trivial' (Rakow 1992), or its ubiquity making it seem "old hat" (Pool 1977a). Perhaps it has been considered too difficult a challenge:

> "The telephone [has] inherently dual effects...Its impacts are puzzling, evasive and hard to pin down. No matter what hypothesis one begins with, reverse tendencies also appear" (Pool 1977a: 4).

Whatever the validity of these assertions, it remains that there is little existing data on the domestic use of wired telephony (Anderson *et al.* 1999) to suggest ways of approaching the study of its mobile cousin. Nevertheless, research published within the last three decades does provide some means of understanding and viewing social and communicative behaviour that suggests that mobile telephony should not be viewed (as it often is) as an isolated area of study. It is thus useful to compare approaches.

As Williams (1974) has said of both television and telephony, American society was prime for the introduction of a modernising technology at their time of invention. Aronson (1971: 307-8) states that:

> "[the telephone] has helped to transform life in cities and on farms and to change the conduct of American business...it imparted an impetus toward the development of 'mass culture' and 'mass society' at the same time it affected particular institutional patterns in education and medicine, in law and warfare, in manners and morals, in crime and police work, in the handling of crises and the ordinary routines of life...it changed the context and even the meaning of the neighbourhood and of friendship; it gave the traditional family an important means to adapt itself to the demands of modernization."

Most important for the purposes of the thesis are the changes within 'neighborhoods' to which Aronson refers; the phone could keep families who were beginning to live further apart in regular contact, and allowed other social networks to connect, regardless of the physical closeness of group members. Its importance for the social relationships of individuals was paramount, enabling "the reduction of loneliness and anxiety [and] an increased feeling of psychological and even physical security" (Aronson 1971: 304). Although also identified as key in the alteration of business practices, the significance of telephony in providing crucial social and emotional connections during the process of modernisation, of which it was a part, contributes to the thinking within this thesis.

It is also important to note that a totalising technological determinism is not invoked here; instead, the myriad changes associated with telephone use are recognised as consequences of a wider, modernising process. This is in distinct contrast to much of the sociology of telephony conducted since, which tends to subscribe to technologically deterministic models of adoption[3] and usage. In fairness, some of the research that has remained tied to what is discussed in section 2.4 as an 'impact' model of technology, has not been conducted by those who have made the social study of telephony their field (see, for example, all papers in Pool 1977b excepting Aronson's). Yet although other approaches to telephony have been explored by, for example, communications researchers (Dordick and LaRose 1992) and social psychologists (Fielding and Hartley 1987), recent analyses of wired and wireless telephony such as Katz (1999a) persist in gauging the social *impact* of the technology. The 'disruptive' influence of technology should be acknowledged (see below), but it needs to be recognised as part of a dialectical process whereby human actors incorporate technology into their lives according to their wants and needs:

> "What we ultimately need...is a focus on the consumer if we are really to understand the social implications of technology" (Fischer 1992: 17).

Socio-historical analyses such as Fischer (1992) also successfully adopt models which take the influence of both the technical and the social into account. Acknowledging

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[3] Within studies of mobile telephony in both industry and the academy, 'adoption' of a mobile phone refers to taking up ownership of a mobile phone.

society's role in the use of telephony has led to the conclusion that the phone did not so much change the lives of Americans, but rather "resulted in a reinforcement, a deepening, a widening, of existing lifestyles" (Fischer 1992: 263). It has been suggested, for example, that the relationship between gender and telephony has altered the original usage and meanings intended for the technology in North America (Martin 1991; Marvin 1988). The importance of recognising the agency of consumers, in the ways in which they interact with technology, is thus shown to be important and is recognised by this thesis as crucial.

This focus on history may seem anomalous within an anthropological study, but it is important both because of the theoretical framework utilised, and the potential for comparison and contrast with current data. In addition it forms part of a trope that focuses on the 'disruptive' potential of technology. The possibility of disrupting existing social practices and behaviours, *in conjunction with* these practices and behaviours themselves, is considered a critical area of study by both social historians of telephony, and academics studying technology *in conjunction with* everyday lives to secure relevant knowledge for industry (Anderson *et al.* 2002). Another noteworthy aspect is that the authors concerned are working with tangible evidence such as historical documents and biographical narratives rather than drawing conclusions from anecdotal evidence - as is practised by some commentators on the role of the phone in society (McLuhan 1964; Myerson 2001). It is a potential problem that the majority of historical research on telephony has focused on North America as a field site. It cannot be assumed that phone behaviours are similar everywhere without taking cultural attitudes and behaviours into consideration; as Katz states, Americans operate within a specific culture which is connected to their usage of telephony (Katz 1999b). Following this premise, UK use of telephones, in particular that of UK students, might be expected to be different, and more data and approaches in this area would have provided a more solid basis for this study.

Elements of anthropological theory and method are to be found within social studies of telephony. Social behaviours, 'life rhythms' and 'lifestyles' as well as demographic influences such as gender, have been taken into account when studying the use of domestic telephony (Lacohee and Anderson 2001). This type of research is thus linked to the thesis in terms of both practical method (as discussed in Chapter 3) and theoretical approach. As something physically located within households, telephony

has been recognised as an integral part of social behaviours and attitudes – it is ever present, and is always a site of potential communication. The "context within which...needs, usage and behaviours occur" (Lacohee and Anderson 2001: 1) is shown to be imperative to understanding, as a 'rich picture' of domestic life is formulated from, for example, large-scale longitudinal household panel surveys and interviews that take place in the user's home. The 'moral economy of the household' approach that has recently emerged from consumption studies has also been applied to telephony. The telephone's role in everyday life, in terms of its practical and symbolic uses and meanings for household members, was assessed via activity diaries and in-depth interviews in a recent study (Haddon and Silverstone 1994).

More social science attention has been paid to the wired phone since the mobile phone became popular within society and the academy. The occasional research produced during the 1980s (for example Singer 1981; Fielding and Hartley 1987) was followed by an increase in publications in the decade that followed, including ethnographic studies of US attitudes to the telephone (Umble 1992; Rakow 1992). Other than the telephone's 'impact' on society, the main concept explored to date has been the relationship between gender and phone use (Martin 1991; Lacohee and Anderson 2001). Simultaneously, however, the existing wired telephone system has begun to be viewed differently, and sometimes separately, from the mobile phone. What is now known as the 'plain old telephone service', or 'POTS' (Kellerman 1993: 3) has come to be, through discourse, viewed as 'primitive' or even redundant, in comparison to the excitingly presented mobile technologies now available. Although interest in new communications technology has increased academic interest in its wired origins, and an understanding of wired telephony is necessary when viewing student mobile use, wireless telephony has been more instrumental in capturing the imagination and, perhaps, the *zeitgeist.*

Despite this scenario, social research on cellular telephony remains limited in scope despite its being slightly more developed than other telephony research. Empirically, much mobile phone research is of a descriptive and exploratory nature, perhaps unsurprising given the relative age of the technology. As something 'technical', telecommunications have traditionally been researched from scientific, technological and economic perspectives. There have been countless publications by scientists that attempt to understand mobile phones in terms of possible damage to the body (see, for

example, Vlassov 2000 on alleged radiation effects; Lamble *et al.* 1999 on the dangers of driving whilst using a mobile[4]). Economists, consultants, journalists, market researchers, cultural commentators and television presenters have all attempted to make sense of the mobile phone "phenomenon" (Katz and Aakhus 2002: 3). Newspaper features (Meek 2002), television documentaries and even theme nights dedicated to aspects of mobile telephony[5] have entered the public consciousness.

Academic social science research on telephony has historically been produced by communications companies worldwide such as British Telecommunications (BT) plc in UK (Lacohee and Anderson 2001), Xerox UK and USA (Grinter and Eldridge 2001), Telenor Norway (Ling 2000a) and France Telecom. Such companies have continued to conduct research in terms of mobile communications, and have been responsible for much of the academic output on mobile telephony since the 1990s; France Telecom for example sponsors the French sociology of telecommunications journal 'Networks' (France Telecom 2002). Mobile telephony research has seen further integration between industry and academia, such as Sweden's Viktoria Institut (Viktoria Institut 2002), the Digital World Research Centre at the University of Surrey (Digital World Research Centre 2002), and BT plc's sponsorship of Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 'CASE' studentships[6]. Eurescom, a German-based European 'telecommunications research and strategies institute', markets itself as "the leading organisation" for collaborative telecommunications research and development (Eurescom 2002.) Purely academic social science interest in mobile telephony is rare. Although it is may be the case that mobile phone use is all about communication (Katz and Aakhus 2002), the field of communication studies currently focuses on mass media such as television and the Internet rather than mobile telephony. Further, there are a limited number of academic outlets in which to publish research; journals such as *Telecommunications Policy* and *Intermedia* retain a largely economic and technological focus.

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[4] The mobile phone will occasionally be referred to in the thesis in its shorthand form, 'mobile'.

[5] An evening of Saturday prime time viewing on BBC1 was devoted to 'The Joy of Text', an assortment of programmes and features about text messaging during summer 2001.

[6] Of which this thesis is an example ('CASE' stands for 'Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering').

Much of the academic/industry research is design-oriented at a micro-level, and considers the importance of user interfaces but not the wants and needs of the user (for example Usui *et al.* 2001), despite pleas by academics within industry to take social theory into account (Churchill and Wakeford 2002). Paid little attention by sociologists, mobile phone use has been the focus of research by those in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer science. These approaches are grounded in technical usability studies, but are beginning to take the 'user experience' into account as well as the technology itself (Palen and Salzman 2002a: 136). It has been suggested, however, that ideas from disciplines such as HCI, computer supported co-operative work ('CSCW') and office information systems ('OIS') may be redundant, and that a new approach is required to understand the mobile phone (Harper 2002).

Sociological and anthropological theory may provide just that. Although by no means a canon, there has been an influx of social science research on mobile telephony since the mid-1990s. Research by UK, US, French, Italian, Australian and Scandinavian authors and organisations has produced what this thesis terms the 'first wave' of mobile phone studies in the social sciences. Research interests have included: gendered usage; adoption of a new technology; usage by young people; usage by working adults; symbolic display; and the relationship between telephony and space. Pan-European collaborations such as Eurescom and COST (Haddon 1997a) have created the potential for comparative research. In this early research, however, there remains a focus on the mobile's 'ambiguous' role in society (Fortunati 1997), which is of minimal help in understanding the relationship between mobile phones and university students, who have quickly come to perceive the mobile as an ordinary artefact.

Although selected social science mobile phone research intellectually engages with debates in the sociology of consumption, public/private boundaries, and the position of ICTs in global terms (for example Haddon 1997b), much of this first wave of research is theoretically limited. It is, for example, rarely located within existing paradigms that seek to explicate the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within society. There is also, as mentioned above, a failure to take theoretical approaches to wired telephony into account when examining the mobile, including the theoretical development made by Fischer (1992) in diverging from an 'impact' to a 'social shaping' approach to telephony.

Another of the limitations of existing research on mobile telephony is that it first became popular as a business artefact, and thus much research focuses on its usage by business persons (see for example De Gournay *et al.* 1997). Research which does explore the non-business role of mobile telephony persists in focusing on a purely domestic context, irrespective of the use of the mobile phone itself, which by definition crosses both physical and ideological boundaries. Further problems are visible due to the recent intellectual stampede to comment on an artefact suddenly deemed new, exciting and worthy of comment. Theorists such as Myerson (2001), for example, attempt to make cultural comment on an artefact they do not (attempt to) understand.

Existing research does provide some direction for the thesis. Ling's research on Norwegian use of mobile phones (Ling 2000a, 2000b) provides the most comprehensive exploration of mobile telephony within a specific country or culture. His more theoretically informed publications (such as Ling 1997) take into account the 'rules and rituals' of Norwegian culture, and asks what the mobile phone's position in this 'social world' is. Following Silverstone and Hirsch (1992b), the symbolic connotations of mobile phone use are emphasised in Ling's (1999b) work on teens and adults. His research on (school age) teenagers' use of mobiles views fashion as playing a large element in adoption and usage. Norwegian teens are seen to have specific ways of using and displaying mobile phones that must be read in symbolic rather than functional terms (Ling 2000e). Having a mobile, for example, is often used to mediate the (Goffmanesque) presentation of self, and differences between groups of adolescents – actions that are termed 'hyper-coordination' by Ling and Yttri (2002). Mobile telephony is also seen by Ling to support the evolution of an adult identity, with mobile phone ownership amongst teens viewed as similar to other markers of the transition to adulthood including one's first party, first alcoholic drink, one's first sexual experience; mobile phone ownership and use helps one become independent (Ling 1999a, 2000c). It is possible that an equivalent interpretation can be made regarding UK university students, although the role of mobile phones in their lives is different in many ways, as the thesis will demonstrate.

Ling (1997) also discusses the role of mobile phones in terms of public and private spaces, as introduced below. The mobile phone's impact on the (higher) 'educational system' is explored (Ling 2000d), but only in terms of the operation of educational institutions, rather than in conjunction with an examination of the lives within them.

The role of mobile phone communication in 'the construction and maintenance of social networks' in Norwegian adult life is also recognised by Ling (1998: 1); however, this work perpetuates a dichotomy between 'useful' and 'inconsequential' social communication to which this thesis refuses to adhere. In addition, although attention is paid, for example, to the micro-environment of the restaurant (Ling 1997), the daily cultural behaviours of Norwegians outside of this specific space are not examined. Some 'ethnographic interviews' do take place, but the survey method is the main source of data. Furthermore, mobile technology is still largely conceptualised in Ling's work in terms of change and impact (Ling 2000d).

There is as yet no comparable set of publications on mobile telephony and UK culture, although individual studies do exist. Churchill and Wakeford (2002), for example, conducted an informal study of UK student mobile users in the south-east of England, by observing their use of mobile phones whilst on a train. Corresponding with Ling and Yttri's concept of hyper-coordination, it was concluded that for students, the mobile has more of a place in student discourse than student lives. Following Du Gay *et al.* (1996), the mobile phone is examined by Churchill and Wakeford as a component in a 'circuit of culture', and is chiefly viewed in terms of its semiotic value. It should be noted, however, that adopting observation as a technique without fully understanding the lives and behaviours of the population studied may lead to problems with interpretation, as Chapter 3 discusses more fully. Viewing the students when travelling within a social group may also have coloured the research findings; Newcastle University students, for example, do engage in group discourses regarding their mobile phones, but when by themselves – as university students often are – mobiles are extensively used to communicate with others, rather than played with. Although in theory the symbolic meanings attached to mobile telephony may seem important to academics, in practice this thinking does not always correspond with the data, as Chapter 8 discusses. Semiotic readings are valid, but this thesis will suggest that the main value for Newcastle University students is practical, and thus an approach which focuses on the mobile phone as signifier is limited.

Work on the role of mobile telephony in relation to gender invites a feminist perspective as to how students use mobile phones. Although potentially able to disrupt social hierarchies, cellular telephony has been found instead to reinforce gender divisions within US middle-class society (Rakow and Navarro 1993). Men and women

are seemingly using mobile phones in different ways due to persisting associations between women and the domestic sphere, and men and the business sphere. Women do use cellphones but in a largely domestic context, linked to notions of order and safety. Research also identifies gender differences within adult and adolescent users in Norway (Ling 1998, 2000a), and adults in Australia (Moyal 1989). The feminist viewpoint that technologies are part of, and perpetuate, gender hierarchies (Cockburn and Ormrod 1993), thus seems to be reified. This thesis is influenced by feminism's approach to the study of technology (further explored in section 2.4 below), but also realises the necessity of studying use and gender relations amongst the student population in context before making theoretical assumptions regarding gendered behaviour[s].

Transformations in the usage of space, specifically those areas delineated as 'public' and private', have been attributed to mobile telephony. Mobility enables personal calls to be made in public, and business calls to be taken in domestic environments; it shifts existing ideological concepts of places, and can cause problems if these new communication patterns are not deemed acceptable (see section 2.5 on anthropology and classification below). Communication companies have produced guidelines on how to use mobile phones in public; researchers have suggested that mobile phone etiquettes need rewriting (Marx 1994). The mobile phone's involvement in the blurring of spatial boundaries has been the subject of specific academic attention (Gant and Kiesler 2002).

Theories presented by the social scientist Goffman have been employed by various authors, to assist in explaining the behaviours associated with mobile telephony in public places. Work on appropriate and inappropriate uses of mobile telephony (Ling 1997), for example, invokes Goffman's concept of 'face work' when dealing with inappropriate behaviour in public places, whereby the 'civil inattention' of using a mobile phone in a restaurant requires observers to 'save face' (Goffman 1971). Goffman's symbolic interactionism is particularly suited to evaluating the way in which mobile phone usage is played out in the public domain according to previously established (and emerging) societal rules, and the specific 'front stage' conventions that must be followed. It can provide a detailed assessment of the social behaviours and etiquette involved in mobile telephony, especially those played out in a public domain such as a passenger train carriage (Murtagh 2002). Whilst the presentation of self in

terms of body language, positioning, and facial expressions is illuminating, however, such micro-observation is not fully adequate in achieving a comprehensive picture of the role of mobile phone in society. Additionally, the inappropriateness of mobile phone use has become less marked over time.

Just as telephony was discussed by Aronson as belonging to modernity, successful attempts have been made to consider mobile telephony within visions of the postmodern or late modern landscape. Mobile phone use has been seen to correlate with aspects of late modernity identified by Giddens, such as communication over distance (University of Sussex Media, Technology and Everyday Life Research Group 1997) and the reflexive construction of self-identity (Hulme and Peters 2001). Increased mobility and global communication have led to what Harvey (1989) terms the 'compression' of space and time, and changes in the perception of space and time; models of a postmodern era with new social practices. These practices need to be viewed, however, in terms of the micro-processes at work in the relationships between people and the technologies they use. It is problematic, however, that many conceptualisations of (post/late) modernity remain related to a form of technological determinism. Theorists identified as writing on postmodernism such as Baudrillard, for example, speak of new technologies as responsible for creating the simulations representative of a new cultural epoch (Featherstone 1991). As discussed in section 2.4 below, viewing (communications) technology as responsible for revolutionary social change conforms to an impact model of social studies of technology that can be viewed as outdated.

There has also been a tendency in mobile phone studies to reach for a seemingly suitable postmodern or poststructuralist theorist, add them, and stir, without thinking quite how the recipe will turn out on completion. Myerson (2001), for example, only knows about mobile phones via newspaper reports, yet is confident using Heidegger and Habermas to provide a 'critical' commentary about mobile telephony's role in society. Cooper (2002) suggests the application of theories by thinkers as varied as Deleuze, Virilio, Heidegger and Simmel, believing that their perspectives may enhance the understanding of mobile phones in society, but is simultaneously wary of the plausibility of this approach. Although social scientists have ably demonstrated that the mobile phone occupies a key place in the global, postmodern landscape (for example Roos 2001), an informed understanding of how it is used is necessary before throwing

bits of theory at it and hoping they will stick. Interestingly, postmodern theorists themselves have failed to recognise the importance of mobile telephony, but, as Roos asserts, "postmodern authors are usually so much out of touch with reality, with what is actually happening, that they are just bound to miss especially the most evident real world changes." (Roos 2001: 11). Only when social theory is particularly relevant to behaviours associated with mobile telephony, and convincingly demonstrated to be so, is a lack of empirical data less of a problem, as with the application of Foucault's (1977) work on surveillance and control (Tuters 2001).

The neglect of empirical evidence involving the user has been commented on in policy discourse - "attempting to understand users on demographic characteristics alone provides a far too limited portrait of users and the experiential conditions of their phone use" (Dervin and Shields 1999: 403-4). As Singer once said of wired telephony research, "There have been colorful and ironic polemics...But there have not been empirical studies in the field" (Singer 1981: ix). Much commentary on mobile telephony is at best, anecdotal, and at worst, apocryphal.

This can produce the converse problem of 'actual data' that is unaccompanied by theoretical analysis; this is symptomatic of some industry research, including that produced in conjunction with academics. The absence of 'actual data' in mobile phone studies is noted by Katz (1999a), but he himself usually relies on quantitative data analysed without cultural or theoretical context. This somewhat lessens the significance of some high quality academic research within industry that successfully combines multi-method data production and social theory within mobile phone studies.

In the absence of a coherent sociology of mobile telephony, anthropological perspectives have also used within academic/industrial collaborations[7]. For example the concept of gift exchange introduced by Mauss (1990) has recently been employed to explore how mobile telephony is viewed by teens (Taylor and Harper forthcoming), and within the domestic household (Nafus and Tracey 2002). Although this theory may not be applicable to the data within this thesis (which does not seem to be connected to gifting), these are useful examples to illustrate the efficacy of anthropological theory in explaining aspects of contemporary technology use. Taylor and Harper's (forthcoming)

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[7] Ethnographic method has recently become popular in industry *per se*, as presented in Chapter 3.

conceptualisation of teen SMS use within a gift-exchange model also demonstrates theoretical development from existing interpretations of mobile phones as fashion accessories/statements (Hulme and Peters 2001; Ling 2000a). It also incorporates a social shaping approach (see section 2.4 below) that not only deems technology as potentially disruptive, but also perceives "that the social world in which we live has a profound impact on the ways that we understand and hence use technology" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 32). Similarly, Roos (1993) ascertains that explanations for mobile usage need to go beyond those of the economic, technical, geographic and political, and also focus on the cultural to understand mobile phone use in his native Finland. He suggests that "it is perhaps just because of our [Finnish] uneasiness in close personal and social communication that we prefer telephones, where there is no need for eye contact or other kinds of physical closeness" (Roos 1993: 447).

Other socio-cultural explanations of patterns in mobile phone use are not so anthropologically informed, however. Mobile phone research often draws conclusions about 'cultural behaviours' without fully investigating what these entail. It has been suggested, for example, that because Belgians, Germans and Netherlanders are not extravagant people, the mobile is unlikely to have a role as a status symbol within these countries (Bakalis, Abeln and Mante-Meijer 1997). Such unsubstantiated thinking stresses the importance of an anthropological approach to telephony, both in theoretical and practical terms.

Various tropes have been employed to describe the interrelationship between mobile telephony and society. The world is presented as having undergone a 'wireless revolution' (Lyytinen and King 2002); visions of mobile phone use persist in being used to illustrate a dramatically changed world of 'perpetual contact', that has been 'transformed' by the 'phenomenon' that is mobile telephony (Katz and Aakhus 2002). Such sweeping hyperbole fails to understand the complex processes of social change of which the mobile phone is but a participant, not an instigator. As such, these technologically deterministic models are unhelpful. Cooper, Green, Murtagh and Harper (2002) are among those who have begun to challenge the rhetoric of tropes such as 'information age' and 'virtual society' in mobile phone studies has also been challenged, suggesting that "any assessment of the adequacy of these terms must be derived, at least in part, from the study and consideration of the situated social and

material uses of technologies in everyday life" (Cooper, Green, Murtagh and Harper 2002: 1).

This section has provided an overview of the key currents in the study of wired and wireless telephony in terms of both research areas and theoretical approaches. It is apparent that there are no existing studies of how university students use or interpret mobile telephony. This is unsurprising given the lack of social science research on its adoption, use and meaning in general. There is thus a large gap in existing research that the study provided by this thesis will partly fill, via its analysis of the mobile phone as a ubiquitous, integral artefact within a social group - university students. The next section draws on broader themes from social studies of technology that complement research on telephony. The subsequent sections in this chapter review concepts and approaches drawn from the study of youth and student lives, and social anthropology, which are combined with perspectives on technology use to provide the conceptual framework introduced in section 2.6.

## 2.3 Social Studies of Technology

As discussed in the previous section, studies of mobile telephony have often been situated outside of the existing theoretical trajectory provided by social studies of technology research (and indeed the anthropology of science and technology, as discussed in section 2.5). This has resulted in a body of work that is often critically uninformed and unconvincing. This section introduces developments within social studies of technology that help provide a more coherent theoretical approach to the study of mobile telephony within a student population. It also demonstrates the success of their application to the study of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Although science and technology studies within social science form a small and isolated part of sociology (Latour 2000), this thesis suggests that the value of these approaches is crucial given the inconsistency of 'mobile phone studies' so far, and is particularly necessary given the parallel lack of approaches to student lives in the literature (explored in section 2.4).

Historically, technology has been perceived as having an 'impact' on society – it has been viewed as emerging, without human influence, to irrevocably changes the lives of the humans around it. Following Karl Marx, sociologists have tended to regard

technology as established on its own developmental trajectory, with causality residing in the agency of objects and machines that influence society but are not particularly influenced by it[8]. As demonstrated below, humans have over time been accorded more influence than in this technologically deterministic model. However, various authors have continued to conceptualise 'technology' as an inanimate, almost alien 'thing' that is, conversely, imbued with agency.

From the perspective of these authors, technology, separate from human enterprise, steers and interferes with social processes, effecting social and physical change. In terms of communications technology, McLuhan famously declared the telephone as an 'irresistible intruder' (McLuhan 1964: 271), simultaneously asserting that technology was changing humanity and the Western world was imploding (McLuhan 1964: 3). Although not all authors posit such a stark technology *versus* society dichotomy, the influence of what has come to be known as an 'impact' model remains visible in various forms today.

For example, although hailed as groundbreaking, Meyrowitz' 1985 volume 'No Sense of Place' applies an impact model to the role of media such as television in Western society, as if they were responsible for global social change. Notwithstanding the fact that his work is based entirely on surmised theory rather than empirical data measuring behaviours and attitudes, Meyrowitz' work fails to contextualise the meaning of technology for the populations concerned. Instead, humans are seen to passively absorb whatever instructions technology gives them, and to become so influenced by media such as television that their whole perception of the world shifts. Although it is undeniable that television has a part to play in late modern social change, the role of human agency also needs to be accounted for, and theorists such as Meyrowitz have failed to do this. This 'impact' model still retains influence in mobile studies, although for the purposes of this thesis it is considered an inadequate theory, as explained elsewhere in this chapter.

Instead the research is viewed through a social shaping lens. This model coalesced in 1985 with the publication of an edited volume (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985), which suggested that the social context in which technology appeared was more important in

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[8] Marx' writing on commodity fetishism views the meanings of objects as intimately connected to social relations (Simon 1994: 232), but his earlier influence still stands.

establishing its use and meaning than was previously thought. For example, as Schwarz Cowan (1985) demonstrates, the wider political and economic context was at least partially responsible for the decision to power refrigerators with electricity rather than gas, when gas was more efficient technologically. Feminist scholars in particular have embraced this social shaping approach, finding it useful in understanding the connections between gender relations and technology (Cockburn and Ormrod 1993). Interestingly, urban geographers and planners have also recognised the utility of such an approach when exploring the role of telecommunications in society (Graham and Marvin 1995; Townsend 2000), whereas sociologists have not.

Taking this approach a step further, the 'social construction of technology' or 'SCOT' model has viewed science and technology as social constructions within society. Although consistent with parallel epistemological shifts in the sociology of knowledge such as the social construction of gender and sexuality (Caplan 1987; Butler 1990), this approach remains somewhat socially reductionist, having moved from a technological to a social determinism. The cultural relativism embraced by this approach does however stress the need for contextual research, and an understanding of how individuals and social groups construct the meanings of artefacts and systems.

It is possible to modify this SCOT approach by taking both technology and social relations into account as Cockburn and Dilic (1994) do with their 'mutual shaping' perspective, which this thesis will follow. This sociology of technology seeks to explain technical artefacts in terms of the meanings given to them in society, and veers closer to an anthropological understanding of the role of technology in society. It does not see society (and individuals), *or* technology, as being the prime directing force, but allows for both or either to be interpreted in economic, political and social terms as components in a relationship. It does not, however, reduce people or artefacts to the level of 'actants' as per the actor-network approach (*cf.* Callon 1987; Law and Hassard 1999), but rather continually seeks to explore what is meant by a human user or a technological artefact.

None of these sociologies have ever attempted to gain further understanding of the telephone, however, and studies of telephony have rarely thought to incorporate them. This is crucial in relation to this thesis, which appropriates the mutual shaping approach in conjunction with existing work on telephony, and social anthropological theory. This section has demonstrated the usefulness of moving on from an 'impact' model to take sociocultural aspects of technology use into account. The next section

introduces research on young people which also influences the conceptual framework used by the thesis.

## 2.4 Youth Studies and Student Lives

This section will highlight the lack of critical attention paid to university students as a population by social scientists, and reveals the inadequacy of 'youth studies' in similarly failing to provide a research paradigm for studying young people at university. It presents a review of the few studies of student lives, and demonstrates that existing theory in this area, which may be of use in the research, is drawn from social anthropology.

As mentioned in section 2.2 above, there is as yet no published data on UK undergraduate student use of mobile phones, and little attention has been paid as to how students interact with technology *per se*. It could, perhaps, be assumed that social science accounts of student lives would be available to shed some light on the behaviours and attitudes of the individuals studied. Such a literature, however, is not in existence, and the majority of UK research into higher education is comprised of work in the areas of policy, welfare, admission numbers and pass rates (Silver and Silver 1997). Those who do take an interest in student lifestyle and consumption are more likely to be market researchers and journalists (such as Shabi 2002).

It is only recently that authors such as Kumar have spoken of their intention to "emphasize the informal side of university life, not as a residual but a central feature of universities" (Kumar 1997: 31). Much of the research on higher education focuses on the university as an institution, analysing its processes and systems and paying little real attention to the people (either staff or students) within it. Although, as this thesis conveys, a 'university' is as much about the people within it as the way that it works, the majority of literature does not seem to take this into account. The changing nature of the university in contemporary Britain (Smith and Webster 1987) is, this thesis argues, directly associated with the behaviours of those within it, yet there is no existing discourse surrounding this idea.

Research on part-time, mature and postgraduate students and their lives has been conducted, but everyday experiences of undergraduate life in the UK are rarely published (Haselgrove 1994). The academy has begun to question this, but has

demonstrated a tendency to lament the lack of data on 'real people' (Silver and Silver 1997) without making an attempt to redress the balance. Although the social science of education attempts to chart change in both the university structure and the demography of students attending university, its focus remains on admissions and numbers, rather than a narrative about university life including the voices of students themselves.

Work on student welfare allows some information to filter through about the daily experience of being a student (for example Berry 1995; McCarthy and Humphrey 1995) but does not focus specifically on this. Research has been conducted on the nature of student 'community' (Kenyon 2000) and the consumption of popular culture by undergraduates (Chatterton 1999), which highlights the nature of student life at the end of the twentieth century, but these are isolated attempts to understand university students on their own terms.

There are also studies of non-UK universities that may help shed light on student behaviours, although the cultural context of Newcastle University needs to be integrated into the research as a specific case. In the absence of published studies of changes in student behaviour at Newcastle upon Tyne or any other UK university, this thesis attempts to plug a research gap, by incorporating historical details of student life in the UK and presenting ethnographic data on the contemporary undergraduate population at Newcastle in later chapters. (There is also a methodological reason for this, as discussed in Chapter 3.)

In 1964 an anthropologically-informed study tried to understand what it meant to be a student at the Sorbonne in Paris. Attempting to integrate the sociology of education with approaches to society in general, it suggested that it may be "futile to hope to find specifically student models of behaviour" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979: 38) due to external sociocultural factors such as class influencing the lives of undergraduates. Research conducted during the 1980s at Rutgers University in the US focused on the neglected informal side of being a student, having found that 'college life', i.e. extracurricular behaviour, "is almost entirely ignored in serious research on American colleges and universities" (Moffatt 1989: 45). This research shows that US college life has much in common with the youth culture of contemporary America, and that what was previous a campus-based life has transformed to include a wider range of activities and behaviours in line with those of other young Americans. Although there are methodological considerations to be taken into account in this research (as discussed in

Chapter 3), it demonstrates the importance of understanding and presenting the behaviours and attitudes of students in their own terms.

The 'youth studies' movement within the UK does offer a focus on the social behaviours of young people, but does not identify students as a specific group and is often policy oriented. Having traditionally focused on deviant and subcultural groups theoretically positioned as separate from the general population (Wilson 1970; Hebdige 1979), the lives of young people as ordinary citizens have been neglected. A thorough examination/deconstruction of what 'youth' or 'students' actually are has also been avoided, coupled with the absence of an exploration of what these groups mean in relation to each other. The study of youth has changed over time, however, as social scientists from various disciplinary backgrounds have sought to explore the meaning of young people's lives in more everyday situations (see for example Wallace and Cross 1990) and to view 'youth' as "a complex and slippery concept" (Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 1998: 4). Work on the transition to adulthood also incorporates work on both youth and students; Jones, for example, emphasises the transitional nature of 'leaving home' in UK society and conceptualises this in terms of a *rite de passage* (Jones 1995). (The application of ritual terms to the behaviour of young people is discussed more extensively later in this section.)

There also exists a body of work regarding the consumption behaviours of young people that contributes to an understanding of student life. The consumption of night-time city spaces has been interpreted as a significant marker of identity for youth and student groups (Hollands 1995), in conjunction with the perceived 'sanitisation' and 'mainstreaming' of urban nightlife (Chatterton and Hollands 2002).[9] Although these studies are limited due to their focus on nightlife, and do not provide a compendium of student behaviour, they offer clues to the nature of contemporary student life – the persistence of 'traditional' student identity, for example, and its 'exclusive needs' (Chatterton and Hollands 2002: 99). Their conceptualisation of the transition to adulthood in UK society as a 'sanctioned' *rite de passage* again correlates with anthropological approaches to the lives of young people as presented in section 2.5 below.

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[9] These ideas are further discussed in Chapter 8 in relation to the suggested mainstreaming of the student population of Newcastle and relation to mobile phone use.

Human geography approaches have been successfully applied to the study of the category 'youth', to identify who people are through what they do in certain spaces (for example Skelton and Valentine 1998). Although there are no comprehensive studies of undergraduate lives *per se,* student 'geographies'– the areas students occupy, and their relation to identity, and community, for example – have been explored in terms of space and time (Chatterton 1999, Kenyon 2000). Such research suggests new approaches to understanding students, via the way they interact with, and consume, spaces and lifestyles. The thesis is informed by this work on various levels, including its focus on the divide between 'traditional' (entry) and 'non-traditional' students, and the regulation of student identity via lifestyle (Chatterton 1999).

Following Chatterton (1999), it is also appropriate to invoke Shields' concept of leisure spaces to support the notion of student life within a 'liminal' setting. Shields views persons as choosing from a variety of images on offer within 'consumption sites', to produce their lifestyles, or 'consumption cultures'. He sees contemporary society as a postmodern domain whereby previously separate leisure behaviours are collapsed into one site, such as the Metro Centre shopping mall in Gateshead which combines a variety of shopping, dining, movie-going and playing experiences under the roof of one complex. Leisure sites are viewed by Shields in a classically Turneresque sense (see below), where "liminal chaos places social arrangements in abeyance" (Shields 1992: 8). Again, this corresponds with classical anthropological thought on ritual as discussed in section 2.5 below (and which contributes to the thesis' understanding of how Newcastle students use mobile phones, presented in Chapter 8).

This section has criticised the lack of empirical research on student attitudes and behaviours, both within the social science of education and youth studies. It has presented an overview of the key themes explored within the university context and highlighted areas, that may be helpful in understanding student life at Newcastle University. It has also drawn attention to anthropological themes used in studying young people which are further discussed in section 2.5 below. The chapter concludes by drawing together aspects from all sections, into the conceptual framework to be applied to the data produced in the thesis.

## 2.5 Key Areas within Social Anthropology

From the outset, this research project was grounded in social anthropological thinking. The study of an artefact, the behaviours of a population and the use of participant observation as a research method (further discussed in Chapter 3), combine to make an anthropological approach. Anthropologies of symbolism, ritual, ordering, science and technology and consumption, are considered relevant to the topic area and reviewed within this section. How they combine with concepts from studies of telephony and student lives to constitute a theoretical approach, is described in the next section, 2.6.

There are important reasons for considering theory drawn from social anthropology for the purposes of this research. Firstly, there is the discipline's intent to explore the behaviours and attitudes of people in terms of those "practices of everyday life" (Agar 1996: 9) that researchers are beginning to see as key to understanding mobile phone use (see section 2.2 above). Secondly, anthropology also views these behaviours in relation to the objects used within social groups and households. Historically, the related disciplines of archaeology and anthropology have paid specific attention to the creation and consumption of material culture since the 19th century. Learning about a culture via the objects it uses was a popular way for the early anthropologists, 'ethnologists', to make sense of the people they were studying.

The popularity of material culture studies within the discipline of social anthropology has retained importance over time, but rose to a higher level of ascendance from the 1980s onwards due to work by, *inter alia,* Miller (1995, 1997), Thomas (1991, 1994) and Appadurai (1988), which has emphasised material culture as a readable text that can embody economic, social and political meaning[s]. These approaches should be viewed in conjunction with the work of Hodder (1991a), whose post-processual archaeology stresses that an artefact cannot be fully understood without as much exploration of context and human behaviour as is possible. This thesis recognises the post-structuralist possibilities of reading the various and changing meanings embodied by objects/technologies as texts. As outlined above, the first wave of mobile phone studies has tended to focus on 'symbolic' aspects of mobile phones, ensuring that the representational aspects of the device and its use are not neglected. This follows important currents in anthropology that emphasise meanings associated with objects, as well as their utility value. Silverstone and Hirsch's (1992b) view of technology as

something 'doubly articulated', which can be read in terms of its function and its symbolism, emerges from the archaeological and anthropological tradition continued by Hodder and Miller.

The manipulation of the body has long been recognised as significant by those researching non-Western societies. What people in Western societies buy, wear, eat, drink and do to their bodies, has also come to be regarded over time by social scientists as important markers of identity (Lurie 1981; Campbell 1987). Although once the focus was on image and use that was out of the ordinary (for example Hebdige 1979), theoreticians have more recently focused on reading the ordinary. In particular Barthes (1993) and Baudrillard (1990) give precedence to the meaning of signs and symbols as taken from a variety of daily contexts such as the wrestling match, the dinner table, and the movie theatre. Bourdieu (1984), for example, demonstrates how French 1960s consumer decisions such as which food to eat, or what music to listen to, are constructed by variables such as class. This thesis will argue that such decisions are crucial to being a contemporary student at the University of Newcastle.

The purchase, use, display and meaning of mobile phones in the student population is not, however, considered as deliberate identity formation amongst university age young people, as it is for teens (explained in section 2.2 above). The application of semiotic interpretations of artefacts can deviate from other essential roles they may play in society. Du Guy *et al.*'s (1996) semiotic reading of the Sony Walkman, for example, views the personal stereo as a metaphor of late modernity, yet fails to explore the importance of the joy of listening to music in personal space. An emphasis on meanings created through production, marketing and representation shifts away from what an artefact means to the user. It seeks to explain more about what a specific object stands for, than how it is used by people within society. Both the practical aspects of the Walkman (i.e. that it is used to listen to music in transit), and the opinions of users, are neglected in this study. Such problems are also evident in Churchill and Wakeford's (2002) application of the same 'circuit of culture' model to student mobile phone use, as discussed in section 2.2 above. It is easy to suggest the symbolic importance of objects without actually asking users what meanings they themselves attach to mobile phones. The necessity of asking consumers questions about their decisions, rather than relying on statistical data, may thus make an imperative methodological contribution within this thesis.

The thesis also suggests that it is important not to jump to conclusions as to what constitutes 'symbolic' behaviour and meaning. For example, anthropological interpretations of what constitutes the symbolic are often more specific than those of, for example, the French semioticians.[10] To them, anything whose use in society can be found with meaning can be read semiotically – for example a rare and bloody steak may (or may not) represent full-bloodedness, patriotism and strength to the French (Barthes 1993). This thesis, however, sees symbolism as more complex than direct representation and meaning. Although *bifsteak* and *frites* may be quintessentially French, it would not be recognised by anthropology as part of a 'symbol system' that gives "human beings a meaningful framework for orienting themselves to one another, to the world around, and to themselves" (Geertz 1993: 250), as advocated by this thesis, and as further discussed in Chapter 8.

Anthropology has found many ways to explore and understand the routine symbolic behaviours and events, or 'rituals' that form part of this framework in non-Western societies. These are usually viewed as having a religious or spiritual basis – for example, the ritual of cattle sacrifice observed amongst the Sudanese Nuer people in the first half of the twentieth century, to appease or engage the help of a Spirit (Evans-Pritchard 1974). In the West it is not so common to conceptualise behaviour as ritualistic, but anthropological analysis can nevertheless enlighten as to the use of space, artefacts and human behaviour. It may be possible to apply such explanations to behaviours within the UK, for example, the university experience, and the transition to adulthood. Although maturation rituals have been the subject of study within anthropology, the lives of young people *per se* have not been accorded specific attention, possibly precisely because of its liminality (Wulff 1995). The study of childhood has been viewed anthropologically (James 1998), but the anthropology of 'youth' or 'students' is rare, particularly in a Western location.

The anthropology of ritual has described ritual participation in critical stages in life that allow one to develop from, for example, childhood to adulthood – termed *rites de passage* or 'rites of passage' (Van Gennep 1960). Van Gennep emphasises the social, rather than physical, maturity attained via transitional experiences which lead to the

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[10] However, the terms 'symbol' and 'symbolism' "have been subject to widely varying uses and interpretations in anthropology" (Seymour-Smith 1986: 273).

conferral of a new social status. He explained these initiation rites in terms of a tripartite structure, involving separation from society before reintegration with it. Emphasis was placed on the dangerous nature of the transitional stage between the two. Unless a ritual is invoked, this structure-less stage is seen to remain problematic and ambiguous. Turner (1967, 1969) built on van Gennep's work with his exploration of ritual symbolism amongst the Ndembu of Zambia. He too saw three phases of ritual, but termed them the pre-liminal, the liminal and the post-liminal. Focusing on the liminal or 'threshold' stage, Turner suggested that at this difficult time-space juncture, all usual rules of a society were likely to be turned on their head until such time as the individual rejoined the social group. The different and ambiguous nature of the initiate was writ large, before being subsumed into the ordinary behaviours of persons already having gained this status. As Chatterton (1999) and Jones (1985) have already suggested, such concepts can be applied to the lives of young adults including university students, who are neither adolescent nor adult but something 'in between'. The thesis develops this idea in Chapter 8, to explore and explain the nature of contemporary student life at the University of Newcastle.

It is also useful to conceptualise student life in terms of the enactment, and continual re-enactment, of behaviours that create and change the identity and meanings of people and things. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* suggests that the symbolic meanings associated with social practices need to be invoked by the use and re-use of certain spaces (Bourdieu 1977). What people do within such spaces is seen as an embodied praxis of behaviours and movements that create, maintain and clarify cultural meanings. The behaviours associated with 'traditional' student spaces and identity have been viewed as 'student habitus' (Chatterton 1999: 199), a notion that this thesis will consider. Although *habitus* can be criticised for disallowing notions of individual agency, it helps in explaining student behaviours within a specific milieu, where being a student requires repeated engagement with certain activities in order to conjure up and represent related meanings. This idea is further expanded in Chapter 8, which brings together data from the thesis in conjunction with theoretical concepts to suggest that student life, including use of mobile phones, requires perpetual re-enactment to effect its meaning.

Related to the anthropology of ritual is work on the classification and ordering of behaviour, concepts and meanings. Investigated at various levels by anthropologists

(i.e. Durkheim and Mauss 1963; Needham 1979), this thesis draws on the theories of Douglas, in particular, to engender understanding of the problems encountered by use in forbidden spaces, and the popularity of the mobile phone in ordering the student schedule. Douglas and Isherwood (1996: 37) introduce the concept of 'periodicity analysis', which allows a distinction between luxury and necessary goods in terms of how they enable people to relieve periodicities – in other words, how they can control timing, and postpone events. Douglas' (1966) work on the way certain concepts and spaces should not be polluted with 'matter out of place', also ties in with this approach. Her analysis of the concepts of 'pollution' and 'taboo' draws attention to the underlying rules and reasons behind certain rituals within society. Douglas illustrates that certain contexts and things perceived as unclean, messy, polluting or taboo, are viewed in this way due to the inability of humans to perceive the world in a disordered fashion. These divisions do not necessarily have a physical basis. Douglas states, "there is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder" (Douglas 1966: 2). Thus what is viewed as anomalous within society is related to the need to make concise symbolic and literal divisions of the natural world in a way which makes it more comprehensible.

An anthropology of science and technology has been in existence for some time. Latour (1987), Rabinow (1996) and Traweek (1988) have studied scientists from an anthropological viewpoint. Turkle (1985) and Haraway (1991) have both examined the interaction between humans and computer technology. Thorough anthropological investigation of the role of science and technology amongst certain populations has been conducted (for example Miller and Slater 2000). Within the anthropological canon, analysis of Internet use has expanded, with 'communities in cyberspace' (Smith & Kollock 1998) being explored as a field site (Hine 2000). Stone's (1996) work investigates the recent increased use of ICTs in terms of how gender identity is formed and conveyed. Although theses studies are focusing on highly specific populations, they demonstrate the ability of anthropology in gaining understanding of the role of technology within populations. Their success has rarely been noted by students of telephony.

Although an ethnographic study of mobile telephony within an undergraduate population has not been conducted until now, anthropological theory has somewhat influenced mobile phone studies, including those involving young people. Similarly,

Umble's ethnography of the Amish incorporates a focus on the role of the (wired) telephone in their lives. Her presentation of the non-acceptance of domestic telephony in Amish culture, demonstrates real integration of the social meanings of the group studied, with their attitude towards phones (Umble 1992). Following Marvin (1988), Umble deviates from an impact model by investigating the attitudes and responses towards the introduction of the telephone in terms of the specific communicative practices of the Amish. For the Amish, telephony is seen to disturb family life; it "had the potential to invade the Amish home – the very centre of Amish faith and life – in a sense, Amish sacred space" (Umble 1992: 190). Her research thus rediscovers "that the meanings of technologies, old and new, are culturally constructed and negotiated in the service of particular values and needs" (Umble 1992: 192). In the absence of ethnographic research on telephony within the university domain, this research demonstrates the efficacy of an anthropological approach in investigating the use (and non-use) and meanings of communications technology within a particular social group. Anthropology has always studied technology; because technologies such as the mobile phone are 'new', they do not necessarily require the application of new theory.

Despite the focus of this thesis and the discipline of social anthropology on 'material culture', it is recognised that the concept of a bounded 'culture' or 'society' is no longer valid (Ortner 1999). As Agar suggests, "communities don't have edges; they're part of larger worlds" (Agar 1996: 4). Although student life operates to a large extent in specific student spaces, it is entirely permeable; it is subject to other influences, and operates within and around other sets of behaviours. As such this thesis does not claim that there is a specific student 'culture' or 'community', but it does suggest that there are specific student behaviours, the enactment of which helps produce a student identity. This thesis argues that as attending university does not mean losing contact with the outside world, there is no concrete boundary between university and non-university culture; there are crossovers and blurring between the two domains. Yet there are behaviours and rituals associated with being a student that differ from those practiced by the rest of society. As such, the Newcastle students are recognised as a social group. Their relation to other aspects of society is also highlighted, however, particularly the connections between university and 'home' life, and students and youth. In addition it is recognised that exceptions to those behaviours identified as 'student' exist, but that the dominant, 'traditional' model of student life embodied at

Newcastle University has come to represent the contemporary 'student experience' (Haselgrove 1994).

For the purposes of this thesis, the discipline of social anthropology will be viewed as critical enquiry into people's lives and their relationship with the material world around them. Its contributions to social theory in terms of ritual, ordering, consumption and symbolism are found to be important for the thesis. This section has presented those contributions most relevant for the thesis. The next section outlines the analytical framework formed by contributions from social anthropology, and the social study of telephony, technology, students and youth.

## 2.6 Overview of Theoretical Framework

This section provides a summary of relevant approaches drawn from the fields discussed above, before demonstrating how they coalesce to provide a conceptual framework. The development of this framework over time is discussed in more detailed in Chapter 3; it is applied to the data produced in Chapter 8.

Telephony studies highlight the danger of relying solely on either empirical data or cultural commentary. Incorporating data on the behaviours and attitudes of technology users is shown to be important. This correlates with anthropological approaches to technologies that both study use and meanings *in situ*, and provide a variety of ways for interpreting these. It also corresponds with an emphasis on the influence of society and individuals upon the technology used, rather than adopting a technological determinism. Studies of young people also demonstrate the efficacy of an in-depth understanding of actual lives, which can be provided by social anthropology. Some researchers also have themselves adapted anthropological concepts to explain these lives.

To summarise therefore, the theoretical framework for the thesis incorporates anthropological theory and method, in symbiosis with a 'mutual shaping' approach to the relationships between people and technology. Existing anthropological theory will be utilised to understand the relationships between students and mobile phones, in tandem with an ethnographic approach which seeks to understand the behaviours and meanings involved at an in-depth level. It is also influenced by theory outside of anthropology, in particular the 'circuit of technology' approach suggested by Cockburn

and Dilic (1994) that has evolved from social studies of technology. In the absence of any coherent theory emanating from the sociology of telephony, this combined approach has been adopted and, this thesis argues, provides a new and extensive perspective that can be applied to further research. As a whole, the thesis reveals information about mobile phone usage by learning about a population of users. This framework therefore provides the background to one of the first social science studies of mobile phone use to use anthropology as its basis, and the first extensive study of a population that uses the mobile phone as a key social artefact, within the anthropological canon.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the key theoretical developments in telephone and student research, and has also introduced concepts drawn more widely from the field of social science to assuage the inadequacy of the former. It pulls these together to provide a conceptual framework with which to approach and view the study of students and mobile phones presented in the thesis.

The next chapter elaborates on the processes involved in constructing this framework, and describes it in more detail. It also presents and evaluates the practical methods applied during the study, and explores the role of reflexivity in the discipline of social anthropology.

# Chapter 3 : Research - Theory and Practice

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation and evaluation of the theoretical and practical approaches taken during the research. It is divided into three parts. The first expands on the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2, and charts its development during the research process. It also relates the way the original research questions were amended in the light of findings from original data and the literature. The second part provides an overview of the research methods used, stating why they were chosen, the level of their success, and suggestions on how to conduct a similar research project in the future. The final section comments on the necessity of reflexivity in the anthropological research process, and details the problems of fitting anthropological findings into the required PhD thesis format.

## 3.2 Development of Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 reviewed existing theoretical approaches towards the study of technology and the lives of young people. It commented extensively on the necessity for considered application of theory, in conjunction with the empirical data produced on mobile telephony. The lack of existing approaches on the study of student lives, and, to a lesser extent, mobile telephony, presented a challenge for the research on both a theoretical and a practical basis. The conceptual framework utilised by the thesis, the development of this framework in conjunction with existing studies and the data produced during the research is explained within this section, together with changes in the research focus over time.

This thesis uses social anthropological thought as its basis, in association with other social science theory and methods. At a macro-level, the decision to approach the study from a social science perspective stemmed from a desire to comprehend technology from the perspective of society and the individuals within it. As discussed in section 3.3 below, choosing suitable social science research methods for the study was an important process. Equally, the conceptual approach to the thesis needed to be selected carefully, and perpetually refined in relation to the data emerging from the study.

Initially the research was influenced on a number of theoretical levels, each of which seemed applicable to the topic of study. Philosophical enquiry into the nature of relationships between individuals and technology was judged an appropriate starting point; social theoreticians of technology provided a conceptual lens through which to view the nature of human-technology interaction. Following Haraway (1991), the thesis prepared to view a 'cyborgian' bodily fusion of mobile and student, where self could not easily be divided from communications technology. The mobile phone was thus conceptualised early on as a container of social relationships that was part of the body, viewed abstractedly, in a phenomenological manner.

Similarly, when interpreting the role of the mobile phone via observation, rather than the lives of students themselves, the symbolic potential of the artefact loomed large. As Chapter 2 discusses, a semiotic approach to the ordinary and material aspects of life can be rewarding (see for example Barthes 1993; Du Gay *et al.* 1996). An analysis of the symbolic meanings attached to mobile phone ownership, usage and display was an important focus during the early stages of the research. The importance attached to the symbolism of mobile telephony by existing mobile phone researchers (see for example Taylor and Harper forthcoming; Ling and Helmersen 2000) served to make this conceptual approach even more attractive.

Early versions of this thesis operated under the banner 'Totem and Taboo', which referred to a book by Freud (2001) I read during my undergraduate days, and which seemed to sum up the mobile phone as a symbolic artefact to think and signify with, that disrupted boundaries and created problems. Over time, however, this type of abstracted enquiry proved to be inadequate in explaining the actual, complex relationships between students and their mobile phones. The theoretical assumptions that can be read into technology usage need empirical data to substantiate their claims, and this was not produced. Maintaining this position would have led it to be mere theoretical musing of the nature criticised in Chapter 2. Applying symbolic meanings to mobile telephony was retained as part of the research, but in a somewhat modified manner. As Chapter 8 demonstrates, mobile telephony can be seen to be representative of student life, but in terms of social status or popularity, for example, it is an empty cipher. The mobile phone remains subject to a textual reading (as per Hodder 1991b; Grint and Woolgar 1997) but how it is used, and what it is actually used for, has taken centre stage.

Consequently, although already an ethnographic project grounded in anthropological thinking (the relationship between the two is explored more extensively in section 3.3 below), over time the theoretical approach to the study became increasingly anthropological. As Chapter 2 discusses, the importance of anthropology in examining populations and their interactions with cultural artefacts makes the discipline particularly appropriate for this study. Within anthropology, material culture has always been 'doubly articulated' (Silverstone and Hirsch 1992a), without being confined to a restrictive 'household' model. Its focus on the usage of objects in the context of the populations using them is highly applicable, particularly in light of the quality of existing theory within the field of mobile phone studies. It also highlights the necessity of understanding the everyday behaviours and meanings of the student population, before attempting to locate the mobile phone within their lives. This influenced the research's shift in focus to an applied, contextualised study of a population of students who happen to use mobile telephony in many specific ways.

Despite this specificity, wider theory drawn from social studies of technology also informs the thesis. Cockburn and Dilic's 'mutual shaping' approach, emerging from the social constructivist school, demonstrates the interconnected, reciprocal influences between technology and society/individuals (Cockburn and Dilic 1994). Rather than viewing the 'impact' of mobile telephony on the student population, the thesis wished to take into account the ways in which students adapted the technology to their needs, transforming its potential uses in terms of their own behaviours and attitudes. Other feminist researchers of technology, and social historians of telephony such as Fischer (1992) and Marvin (1988), also advocate a social shaping model. Combining this type of approach with the empirical data leads the thesis to view the social changes associated with the popularity of mobile phones as part of a wider process of transformation in contemporary student life.

The adoption and discarding of various theoretical approaches was echoed in the creation of research questions and research topic focus. The research journey commenced with broad parameters; anecdotal evidence had suggested an exponential increase in the use of mobiles by university populations. Learning about 'The Use and

Meaning of Mobile Phones and Pagers in Student Social Networks', as the original title proposed, was open to myriad theoretical and practical research foci.[1]

The potentially wide scope of the project called for an identification of the key areas and themes in student usage of mobile phones, in which the survey (see section 3.3 below) played a major part. Existing research also retained an influence. The first research questions would reveal the number of owners of mobiles, types of usage and reasons for use. The symbolic aspects of mobile telephony would also be considered; as discussed above, the symbolic importance of display and meaning (amongst teens in particular) was initially an important research focus. (For further expansion on the types of questions asked, see section 3.3 below). Other important themes from the literature expected to be found in the study were differences in ownership, use and attitudes between genders, and reactions to the changing nature of public and private space.

The subsequent data produced changed these expectations, affecting both the research themes and the associated theoretical analysis. Gender, for instance, was found to be a negligible factor. Stylistic connotations did exist but, as the thesis will demonstrate, the various aspects of use were the most important association between students and mobile phones. Anthropological interpretation of a population and its key artefact was once again emphasised, as the research process focused on the ethnographic detail of student life to discover what made mobile telephony so important to this social group. Combined with further exploration of mobile telephony themes identified from questionnaire data, interviews with students explored their everyday behaviours and attitudes in order to identify the linkages between these behaviours, and the use and meanings of mobile phones in student lives.

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[1] Pagers subsequently proved to be unimportant in student lives. Although 'social networks' are important to mobile telephony, other aspects of student lives are too, so the focus was extended, in part as a movement away from existing studies of mobiles and teens (see Chapter 2 and elsewhere) that stress only the social aspect of mobiles.

The conceptual framework applied to the study is therefore grounded in the discipline of social anthropology, which has traditionally sought to interpret the beliefs and practices of persons in cultural context (Lewis 1985: 67). Following demands for an understanding of the everyday lives of mobile users (Fischer 1992; Anderson *et al* 2002) and undergraduate students (Haselgrove 1994; Silver and Silver 1997) by researchers in the field, the methodological aspects of anthropology, both theoretical and practical, are considered extremely relevant for this enquiry. Anthropological approaches to ritual, ordering and routine behaviours as discussed in Chapter 2 will be theoretically applied to the data when interpreting its meaning. Coupled with recognition of the 'mutual shaping' approach that views people and technology as part of a reciprocal process of change, this provides the conceptual framework to the study. This section has outlined the evolution of this framework in conjunction with existing research and the data produced during the study.

## 3.3 Research Methods

This section presents and evaluates the research methods chosen for the research project. It discusses the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative methods, the ethnographic tradition of social anthropology, and how the data from the project is viewed and analysed. The final section, 3.4, will discuss how the data is presented, and the importance of reflexivity within the social sciences.

Due to the lack of any data on student communicative behaviour, the first aim of the research was to produce exploratory data that would contain themes for further research. As "research techniques are a bit like fishing flies: you choose the right one for the fish you want to catch" (Kane 1985: 51), a large-scale survey was deemed the most applicable method for this type of enquiry. It was seen as quick, cheap, and able to provide factual information for analysis (Bell 1987: 9). Although not a traditional anthropological research method, the survey is becoming increasingly used, particularly in larger, urban populations (Agar 1996). For the purpose of this research it took the form of a questionnaire, designed to produce data on ownership and use of mobile phones, attitudes towards them, and social aspects of student life. The themes within the questionnaire were influenced by observation and literature on telephony, specifically Haddon's agenda for future research on mobile telephony (Haddon 1997c). (The final version of the questionnaire can be located in the appendix.)

Given a population of 13,000 Newcastle University students in total (including postgraduate, mature and part-time students), the study required a manageable sample. As the category 'student' can mean a variety of things, a decision was made that the 9,370 full-time, UK-resident undergraduate students aged between 18 and 24 would be the study's focus. This was linked in part to the desire to identify a sample likely to exhibit similar behaviours (as participant observation suggested), but was also due to the lack of social science research on this type of student.

Initial questions from the research proposal were as follows: How often and how much do students communicate with their families, friends and peers? How do they communicate with these people? What are the perceptions of and attitudes towards these modes of communication? In conjunction with literature on telephone use and students and participant observation data, these questions were expanded into a 12-page questionnaire incorporating questions to elicit demographic information, data on mobile phone purchase, use and attitudes, and data on communicative and general student behaviours. A list of the types of questions used in questionnaires was produced using a social researcher's handbook (Bell 1987). How the questions were asked – if they were 'open', 'list', 'ranking' or 'quantity' type questions, for example – was matched to the information required.

The questionnaire benefited from an extensive review process. Colleagues offered valuable support and insight, giving advice regarding the content and style of the questionnaire, taking the dual role of social researchers and members of the public. It was specifically evaluated, after Bell (1987), in terms of ambiguous wording, double questions, leading questions, presuming questions, hypothetical questions, sensitive questions, completion time and layout. The survey was piloted with a group of 3rd year undergraduates, who completed the questionnaires anonymously and also provided verbal feedback regarding content and style.

A random sample of 1 in 10 of the (full-time, UK-resident, undergraduate, aged 18 to 24) population chosen for the research at Newcastle University was planned, with 937 seen as a manageable number in terms of costing, posting, and data entry. The survey took the form of a self-completion postal questionnaire, to be returned to a 'Freepost' address by external or internal mail. Each questionnaire sent out was accompanied by a covering letter giving further details about the research, headed with the University crest, and containing my details and a colour photograph of myself; reminder

questionnaires were sent to those who had not responded after two weeks had elapsed, again accompanied by a letter (copies of both letters are provided in the Appendix). This seemed an effective, low cost means of accessing a large sample and procuring a high response rate (sending questionnaires via internal mail to those in student residences further reduced costs). Survey responses were expected to provide data for further exploration during interviews, as well as a variety of informants who would be asked to participate in further aspects of the research.

Due to problems with the sample provided by the Registrar's office, however, an extra 830 questionnaires were issued to ensure that all age groups required were represented in the study. It had transpired that the first random set of 937 students had been sampled from a list of students aged 21 to 24. Another sample was therefore run which sampled 18 to 20 year olds in proportion to their representation in the population. Responses from both groups were used as data, with responses from the 21 to 24 year old age group weighted down, in proportion to their representation in the population. In total, 1,767 questionnaires were sent to 18.9% of the total population studied. On a practical level, this increased the time spent on tasks such as filling and franking envelopes, and data entry. A good response rate of almost 60% further added to this consequence, although this was welcome in terms of representativeness as it provided data on 11% of the population studied.

The survey provided numeric data from which to draw statistical conclusions, and background data to themes that could be followed up in interview. It was analysed using the statistical software package, SPSS for Windows. How the survey would be analysed was implicit in the manner it was designed and the content it included. It also contained qualitative components that were analysed in a less structured manner, as described below in terms of interview data.

Qualitative research was seen as paramount to the study. Participant observation, interviews, focus groups and user diaries were planned methods. Using complementary methods has been noted as a feature of the 'best' social science research (Allan 1991: 177). By definition, qualitative research "is a *diagnostic* feature of ethnography" (Agar 1996: 9), and reliance on quantitative data is perceived as part of a positivist tradition, involving *a priori* establishment of areas of study and hypothesis testing, not embraced

by the thesis or social anthropology in general.[2] As Bell (1987: 9) states, "Surveys can provide answers to the questions What? Where? When? and How?, but it is not so easy to find out Why?" Industry research (for example Gant and Kiesler 2002; Fortunati 2002) had also demonstrated the benefit of using complementary methods.

Anthropology as theory, and participant observation as method, go hand in hand. Participant observation played a dual role – providing background data for survey/interview themes, and ethnographic data to understand student life in general. As a new mobile phone user myself, spending my days on campus, I was to an extent participating in the life I was trying to understand. Approaching the mobile phone as a cultural artefact amongst a population of persons of a certain age, area of residence and type of livelihood produced data relevant to the study. It is also a method that is beginning to prove popular in the study of communications technology in the commercial sector. Researchers from the US communications and computer company Intel report that "industry has witnessed a marked increase in the use of ethnographic methods over the past two decades, particularly in high tech" (Sherry and Salvador 2002: 109). This thesis adds another methodological slant in that it performs 'anthropology at home' (Jackson 1986). Although research on UK behaviours is conducted by UK anthropologists (see for example Rapport 1993), this remains unusual within the discipline, particularly for first time researchers.

Participant observation is recognised as an unstructured method that is learned in the field; you "have to make it up as you go along" (Carrithers 1996: 231). For the purpose of this study, student spaces both on and off campus were explored, with behaviours and conversations recorded in a notebook, and important areas mapped. Additional data was added over time from off-campus locations such as public transport, pubs, restaurants, student houses, and city streets. Consequently, the ordinary unfolding of student life was observed and recorded.

It became clear, however, that only by enrolling as an undergraduate student could one fully be integrated into the undergraduate population. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, to become a student there are various parameters that need to be fulfilled, such as getting

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[2] Although "a prominent argument in recent criticism is that much ethnography has retained elements of positivism, rather than making a sufficiently radical break with it" (Hammersley 1992: 2).

to know colleagues from Freshers' Week onwards. Merely attending lectures, having a drink in the Union or inhabiting a Department did not fulfil these requirements. Informal interviews with students did take place, but not when living *amongst* them, as *one of them*. Further, there was a conflict of interest in the duality of my role as student and as teaching assistant, associated with other members of staff.

Future research on students might perhaps find different ways for the researcher[s] to become integrated with the student population, although there are ethical problems to take into account as discussed in section 3.4 below. Researchers within industry have adopted shadowing or 'tracking' methods to produce observational data without engaging in long-term ethnographic study – for example Palen, Salzman and Youngs (2000) tracked new mobile users in their first six weeks of use; De Gournay *et al* (1997) accompanied travelling managers on business trips, observing their mobile phone use and asking them about the content of calls; and Murtagh (2002) offers the preliminary results of an ethnographic study which, in their initial form, comprise ethnomethodological research on passenger trains in the UK.

Diaries can be time consuming for individuals to complete thoroughly and their representativeness can be questioned (Bell 1987: 80). They are nevertheless popular in mobile phone studies as a method, particularly within industry research, and human-computer interaction approaches (Grinter and Eldridge 2001; Palen and Salzman 2002a). Three female students completed a user diary designed to contain details of all their mobile phone calls and text messages over the space of two days (the format is located in the appendix). These added another level to the research available, especially as they gave details of conversational and SMS content which would otherwise have been unavailable.

Another difficulty with using observation as a method is that within the University context, what is observed tends to be only certain modes of communication. Using the mobile in public is, as Chapter 7 reveals, only one aspect within its range. Observed calls only partially represent how students use mobile phones: at a time when they are in transit between lectures, seminars or other study; between social meetings; and within the public gaze. What is heard is, by definition, a phone call made in a public arena, not the private areas that students also occupy and at times prefer. Nor can one see the person on the other end of the phone, or the content of text messages, both of which offer information to complete our picture of student mobile use. (Text

messaging in particular is a hugely popular part of mobile phone use amongst students that cannot be discerned by the observational eye or ear alone.)

The problems with participant observation were alleviated, however, by documentary study of the University's student newspaper The Courier[3], and access to student houses during interview. Visiting the homes of the individuals studied is another method gaining popularity in industry research on use of communications technology (see, for example, Anderson *et al.* 1999). Another advantage was that the students interviewed were highly informative and easy to talk to on a range of subjects. Interviews elaborated on issues from returned questionnaires, and explored other aspects of student life. Individuals were chosen for interview by the random selection of cases from the 671 respondents who had specified their availability for further research. These were narrowed down to 24 students who represented all of the variables considered important to the study – such as gender, age, ownership, educational background, location of termtime residence, and number of calls made.

As with the questionnaire, a list of topics and questions to be covered during the interview was constructed (this, together with one entire interview transcript, is available within the appendix). These questions emerged from a) topics partially explored in the questionnaire, and b) topics created by questionnaire data. Research on how to conduct successful interviews was carried out, using, for example, Rubin and Rubin (1995), a handbook on qualitative research. QSR Nud*Ist software was used to code key qualitative themes from both questionnaire and interview, although actual analysis was a less structured mental process, interpreting the content of the themes in light of existing studies and observational data.

During the research process it was also decided to adopt an historical approach to student life at the University of Newcastle. The decision to contrast behaviours and attitudes over time with those of the undergraduate population studied was in part an attempt to clarify the specific, changed and changing nature of contemporary students. It is also part of a change in social anthropology, a discipline that has been criticised for its ahistoricity (Hammersley 1992). Over time, "anthropologists have come to recognize the need to include historical information, both ethnohistory and the

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[3] Every issue from its inception from 1949-2001.

historical background to the regional, national and international context of the fieldwork setting" (Seymour-Smith 1986: 147). As mentioned in section 3.4, the narrative device of the 'ethnographic present' can represent populations studied as static and unchanging, rather than captured at a certain time and in terms of use of a newly popular technology, against a backdrop of social and economic changes in the UK university system.

Other than the problem of access discussed above, the research methods involved did not create any major difficulties. Any improvements to be made were minor, and arose due to the research process being conducted without much prior experience in using the methods employed. In retrospect, small stylistic alterations could have been made to the survey to ensure less confusion in the interpretation of some answers (see, for example, 3a, which would have been more effective if it had provided a list to choose from). The main problem was that of the sample issued, but there was no way of checking that it was representative of the population studied as, for confidentiality reasons, only the names and addresses of students were provided. Using an alternative means to survey a population of this size would be difficult. Without this initial survey, which was mailed out centrally to student residences and bore the university crest, the project would have had to resort to advertising for informants, which would have a) given a non-random sample, and b) decreased the breadth of data. If I were to re-design the survey, I would have a better idea of the types of questions I wished to ask and how I wished to ask them – but this is to be expected now the research process is completed, data produced and conclusions found.

In his agenda for research on mobile telephony, Haddon suggested that:

"Typical questions about possession might include determining which individuals or households own mobile phones and their reasons for acquiring them, while typical questions on usage patterns might address who uses mobile phones within households, when they used, the length of calls, the type of calls and the purpose of calls" (Haddon 1997c: 1).

These topics are only part of the comprehensive study contained in this thesis. It was also considered necessary to provide ethnographic exploration of the population on students; where this proved problematic, other methods were incorporated. Given the size of the sample, a postal survey was conducted, which produced initial data and

individuals for further research. Historical background has also been provided by the incorporation of documentary evidence. This triangulation approach has provided a wealth of 'thick description' (Geertz 1993) that helps contextualise the research findings. The data produced has been analysed in comparison to existing studies and on its own merits, using a conceptual framework that combines anthropological theory and the 'mutual shaping' model from social studies of technology.

This section has presented the conceptual framework and research methods adopted and applied, charted their development, and evaluated this success. The next section discusses the problems involved in producing a text from anthropological findings, and explores the notion of reflexivity within the social sciences.

## 3.4 Reflexivity and Writing

The reflexive turn in anthropology began in the late 1970s with Rabinow's (1992) confessional 'Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco', which aimed to reveal the nature and influence of the anthropologist within and upon the field. Hitherto, the influence of the researcher on the research process had largely been ignored; the ethnographic monograph and anthropological writing had remained separate from the reality of the field site. The self-aware nature of anthropological research has, however, persisted since Rabinow, and a similarly reflexive approach is taken within this chapter.

Reflexivity has contributed to the 'crisis of representation' in social anthropology (Agar 1996: 12), whereby translating behaviours and meanings in the field to the written page is recognised as a problematic process. Ethnographic writing has traditionally required the fulfilment of certain narrative conventions (Clifford and Marcus 1986) – this involves stranding one's informants in the ethnographic present, presenting an holistic version of events with no loose ends, no methodological problems, and no insight into the influence of the ethnographer on the field she studies. Within the last two decades, this way of representing anthropological data has undergone a process of change, and the researcher's thoughts and opinions can be found intertwined with the 'data' that was previously considered separately (see for example Campbell 1995). Recognition that data is *produced* rather than *collected*, that it is influenced by the researcher's intellectual and personal 'baggage' has become part of the anthropological research process:

> "Description is never 'pure', a direct and unchallengeable representation of the world. All 'facts' involve theoretical assumption" (Hammersley 1992: 34).

Within the traditional PhD structure, however, students are encouraged not to deviate from the expected thesis format. Advisory texts for PhD students rarely acknowledge an anthropological focus, and instead reproduce a positivistic social science tradition that consists of research 'strategy', 'rationale' 'objectives' and 'hypotheses' (Clark and Causer 1991), and does not appear to involve a living, breathing researcher. It has been said that "qualitative research often raises problems of data presentation. How can you portray all the richness of the material you gathered in a structured, systematic form?" (Allan 1991: 187). This chapter is the only one within the thesis that writes informally about the research, is reflexive about the research process, and allows me, in the first person, to inject a sense of the 'behind-the-scenes' reality encountered during the research project. It is used as a deliberate device to highlight the restrictive nature of the PhD format, whilst acknowledging that adherence to this format is a key part of completing the thesis.

Another problem experienced in the writing process was how to represent the students who had helped answer questions about their lives. The device of naming 'informants' or 'interviewees' has been perceived within anthropology to contribute to the 'othering'[4] of people in the field. I have therefore referred to these people as 'students', as this was their identity during the research context. That I too was a student means that the boundary between us, which was always nebulous, is thus left deliberately blurry. The students are also referred to as 'individuals', a category that hopes to convey the individual thoughts and experiences that 'they' brought to the project.

The reflexivity process also involves a consideration of ethics. As discussed in section 3.3, differences between undergraduate and postgraduate life led the research conducted to be more observation than participation. Direct access to undergraduate social groups would have involved covert research, which has ethical implications. This type of research has been conducted within a US university (Moffatt 1989, 1991) but for the purposes of this research was deemed ethically inappropriate as well as a

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[4] i.e. the persistence of a colonialist attitude that represents the anthropologist/author as superior and the people she or he lived with as 'other', different, and therefore inferior.

problem in practical terms. A high ethical standard was doubly necessary because of the industry-sponsored nature of the study; 'covert research funded by BT plc to find out about how undergraduates use mobile phones' is not likely to be appreciated by the public. The ESRC believe that it is "important that objectives or output requirements are not set, particularly by the non-academic partner, which would conflict with ethical and confidentiality requirements" (Bell and Read 1998).

## 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has put the conceptual framework, research and writing methods used in perspective. It shows how they came into being and evolved, in conjunction with existing research and the research process itself.

The theoretical framework developed through both revisiting the literature and positing its suitability in interpreting the data. The initial research proposal contained theoretical assumptions regarding the importance of the mobile phone drawn from occasional observation and anecdotal evidence. Having conducted research and analysed the data in conjunction with the available literature, these thoughts were shown to be uninformed assumptions and a critical assessment of the theoretical approach was necessary.

Research methods were selected which were found to be appropriate given the nature of the topic and the theoretical perspective. These were a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods that produced ethnographic research regarding the population of undergraduates studied and their relationship to mobile telephony.

It remains that sufficient analysis of the multi-location, multi-purpose mobile phone has not been undertaken. Viewing how university students employ mobile phones in their lives will go some way to filling this gap – their social, workplace, study, and parental spheres are all brought into relief via this one piece of technology. Studying the different yet overlapping areas within student life provide a perspective that may also to be applied to the lives of others in the workplace and the household in future research (see Chapter 9).

The next chapter provides an historical overview of telephony in the UK to introduce key elements to the reader.

# Chapter 4 : A Social History of Telephony in the UK

## 4.1 Introduction

The research contained within this thesis was conducted during 1999 to 2001, when Britain saw an exponential increase in mobile phone adoption in the domestic market. Researching the relationship between students and mobile phones thus occurred at a specific time in the development of telephony, and its use in UK society. This chapter charts the history of telephony from its inception onwards, to provide background to the context studied. It shows the growing importance of communications technology over time, and also outlines the rapid uptake of mobile telephony in recent years and its role in people's lives. This provides important accompanying material when examining the adoption and use of mobile telephony in the student population. studied. Later chapters reveal the rapid adoption of mobile telephony into student lives, and its subsequent importance therein.

## 4.2 A Telephonic History

At the time of writing, industry analysts and cultural commentators are beginning to speak retrospectively of the changes in the telecommunications sector during the time period 1999 to 2001:

> "What happened in the late 1990s in the sort of radical shift that usually only happens every fifty years or so. Economists call it a 'kondratieff long wave'; journalists call it a 'feeding frenzy'. It is generally caused by the confluence of rapid technological change with a shift in market expectations" (International Telecommunication Union, 2002: 18).

As this thesis argues, student life is no longer separable from the rest of society, and thus cannot be studied in isolation from its surrounding social environment. Student usage of mobile telephony is behavioural, as dicussed in Chapter 8, but can also be situated within a more general historical trajectory of telecommunications within the UK. This chapter demonstrates the breadth and depth of mobile phone usage within a population within a very short time. It aims to locate 'the telecommunications revolution' within the UK in historical perspective. A social history of telephone use

allows an understanding of the telecommunications industry from its inception, and how it has been perceived in relation to the UK population as a whole. Subsequent chapters narrow the focus to the population studied and its usage of mobile telephony, before placing these findings into the wider theoretical and research context.

Wired telephony allows transmission of human speech over space, via a handset containing a transmitter and receiver, connected electrically over distance by cables. Patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876, use of this 'telephone' method took many years to fully develop in the UK. Initially perceived as a business tool (Martin 1991; Marvin 1988), in an environment where the British Post Office was protective of its existing telegraph technology, telephony was seen as a novelty application. A license for private usage was issued in late 1879, but by 1881 there were just 186 private lines established (Robertson 1947).

Admitting the telephone directly into the office or home (it would be many years before the public 'call box' was established) apparently required cultural adjustment. The 'British Association for the Protection of Telephone Subscribers' perceived telephone callers as "unwelcome visitors" at the end of the 19th century (Haynes 1993). The phone and its 'disruptive' influence in previously private worlds was seen to require adjustment time from the UK population[1]. Influenced by the telegraph, initial conversations between people were not reciprocal or 'two-way', but merely conveyed information. By the early 20th century, telephone use in the household had become more conversational, although it remained "greeted with awe, a certain amount of flurry, and genuine disapproval at the extravagance of it" (Robertson 1947: 89). The existence of several fledgling telecommunications companies attempting to provide both infrastructure and handset technology within the UK was problematic and confusing for the industry *per se* (Robertson 1947).

In 1891 a telephone cable was laid from England to France, allowing the first overseas telephony from the UK. By 1912 the government had granted control of the telecommunications industry to the Post Office, a nationalised company. The telecommunications sector experienced "steady growth and improvement of the system" in these early years (Robertson 1947: 9) which continued at a 'comfortable' 5

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[1] The academic trope regarding the role of 'disruptive' technology in society is introduced in Chapter 2.

to 7% throughout the remainder of the 20th century (International Telecommunication Union 2002: 18). After World War I, the Post Office decided to establish a more efficient system; as in the US (Fischer 1992), the telephone began to be marketed by them in terms of sociability between people, in addition to its other functions.

The Post Office's telephone system was viewed positively post-World War II, and ran successfully as a monopoly for many decades. By 1984, as well as its being a necessary business tool, 78% of UK households had a phone (Chandler 1994: 2). Domestic telephone use had developed over the decades, with the phone having "migrated from an instrument found most often in the hallway of the home in the 1960s, to its ubiquitous position in the 1990s in the living room, kitchen, and even the bedroom" (Lacohee and Anderson 2001: 665-6). British Telecommunications *plc* later split from the Post Office, to be solely responsible for the telephone industry; the company was privatised in 1984 amidst deregulation of the telecommunications industry. Broadband (cable) technology companies began to offer an alternative service during this decade; BT still dominated the market, however, due to its ownership of the existing telecommunications infrastructure and the related problems for other companies in entering the previously monopoly-controlled market. By 1992, BT still had a 95% share of the telecoms market (The Economist 1992a).

Meanwhile, mobile telephony was making waves in the UK business sector. A contemporary 'mobile phone' provides, *inter alia,* the functions of a wired telephone, within a handheld device that is powered by a battery. The first 'mobiles' were based on analogue cordless technology (such as that of the portable wired phone), and, later, (digital) cellular radio technology, introduced in 1979. As well as enabling the user to make and receive calls whilst 'mobile', i.e. used in transit or motion, this device is important due to its ability to be used whilst stationary, without needing to plug into a wired network, and its being personal to the user. In addition it provides a number of other services as shown in Figure 4.1:

| |
|---|
| • Send and receive telephone calls from other mobile phones |
| • Telephone book and limited calendar functionality |
| • Mobile short messaging of text, graphics and music (send and receive) |
| • Alarm clock, calculator, games |
| • Online data access through WAP or IMODE services |
| • Caller identification with name recognition from telephone book |
| • Personal voice mail with mobile access |

Figure 4.1: Eight Different Features Of The Modern Mobile Phone.

Source: *Studying the Use of Mobile Technology* (Brown 2002: 6).

It is imperative to remember that:

> "mobile technologies aren't really new at all; indeed they have been around for many decades. What is new is the fact that they are now readily available to the consumer, and the consumer has responded by buying them in vast numbers" (Harper 2002: 207).

Until the mid-1980s, however, all UK phonecalls were transmitted and connected to the telephone network by cables wired to households and workplaces.

The first mobile license was awarded to Racal in 1982; their company Vodafone made the UK's first mobile call on 1st January, 1985 (Vodafone 2002). Used at first in cars[2] by salespersons in transit, cellular phones were 'radically different' (Clancy 1990: 9) from previous telecommunications devices because they could be contacted on one number, whatever the location. They soon became used by and associated with City traders in London:

> "Cellular radio was initially positioned to attract executives for whom the price of the equipment and the cost of service could be justified in terms of the

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[2] 'Carphone Warehouse', an existing mobile retailer, retains its name from these times.

> increased productivity and commercial gain that could be achieved by improved use of time away from the office" (Clancy 1990: 9).

Handsets were at first cumbersome and expensive; as one commentator has mentioned, even by 1988 owning a mobile "was still seen as about as essential as a second Porsche" (Haynes 1993). Mobiles had become a status symbol associated with affluent professionals – who were perhaps not as averse to holding noisy phone conversations in public as other members of society (holding conversations when in the public domain was definitely not an accepted form of behaviour). Wireless telephony swiftly became linked to 1980s 'yuppie'[3] culture in the UK (Haddon 1997a: 1), which was typified by increased consumerism and excess.

The UK government initially issued only two mobile licenses - to BT's Cellnet and Racal's Vodafone - as they perceived the new industry as risky. These companies used an analogue communications system, but over time this could not contain the growing capacity of users and call quality was "falling below public expectations" (Gardiner and Tuttlebee 1990: 237). In 1989 the UK government awarded licenses to three more telecommunications companies to establish digital networks – these were Mercury, Unitel Ltd and Microtel Ltd. This next stage of mobile telephony, which is the one studied by the thesis, became known as 'generation 2.5'.

In 1992, just 2% of the British population had cellular phones, and 95% of these used them for business purposes (The Economist 1992b). Over time, the usefulness of cellular telephony in business led to its expansion. In 1993, the telephone manufacturer Motorola reported that 40% of the world's workers spent their working days away from a fixed location (Haynes 1993). A 'horizontal market change' occurred in that, once one company in a sector had accrued the advantage of using mobile phones, the others found it necessary to follow suit to stay in the market (Clancy 1990). Within a few short years a more widespread demand for mobile phones occurred, as they became more technologically sophisticated, easier to handle in usability terms and more competitively priced. This was also a time of economic recession in the UK, and growth in the business market for mobiles had slowed. Advances in computing technology and increased competition between telecoms and technology manufacturers

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[3] 'Yuppie' is a nickname for a 'young, upwardly mobile professional' or 'young, urban professional'.

led to large price cuts during the early 1990s. Handsets became smaller and easier to use; heavily subsidised over time by networks, they became cheaper in price. The lower cost technology for the consumer meant that they could be marketed to a wider market.

Vodafone and Cellnet decided to market private customers with packages aimed at emergency and occasional use. A mobile phone handset cost between £250 and £300, with connection fees priced at £25 to £30 and network subscription fees at £15 per month; peak rate calls cost around 50 pence per minute. These costs are far higher than those paid today, and were likely to mean less profit for the telecommunications companies as domestic consumers spent less than business consumers on mobile calls. It nevertheless meant that Vodafone and Cellnet began to increase the penetration rate of mobile phones in the UK population.

In 1993 *digital* cellular services began to completely replace existing analogue systems. The Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) standard offered better call quality, and opened up the possibility of mobile phonecalls to Europe. Handsets were less cumbersome, with some "no bigger than a cigarette packet" (The Economist 1992c). Newly licensed companies, (Mercury's) One2One and (Hutchison Telecom's) Orange, introduced digital cellular services via the Personal Communication Network (PCN) during 1993 and 1994. Continued technological advances in systems infrastructure and handsets, combined with lower pricing, enabled mobile telephony to become increasingly popular with the domestic as well as business sector. The industry did not, however, predict the steep rise in mobile phone adoption that occurred during the next decade.

In 1990, "the beginnings of a quiet revolution" in telephony was observed (Tuttlebee 1990: 1); this quickly gathered noise. By the end of the decade the rapid adoption of mobile telephony was viewed as a phenomenon within UK society, by both the national media and the academy. Although high rates of adoption had occurred elsewhere in Europe (Scandinavia, for example):

"By the start of 1996 the UK was one of the largest markets for telephony in Europe with the second and third largest European operators" (COST 248 Workgroup 1997: 9).

By 1995, there were 4 million mobile phone owners in the UK (The Economist 1995). Vodafone had introduced its short text messaging ('SMS') service in November 1994, and the first non-contract mobile package, 'Vodafone PrePay', in September 1996, (closely followed by its digital 'Pay As You Talk' prepay service in November 1997). These services were to help popularise the mobile in the youth sector (Vodafone 2002).[4] Brand loyalty to Cellnet and Vodafone, coupled with low cost or 'free' handsets, ensured that their services remained heavily subscribed to despite recent competition - by the late 1990s Orange and One2One had extended their network coverage to cover most of the UK population, thus making them relatively more popular (by 2000, Orange was owned by the Germany company Mannesman, and was sold to France Telecom as Vodafone and Mannesman merged to form 'Vodafone Airtouch.' One2One was bought by T-mobile, part of Deutsch Telecom, in 2002).

Mobile phone sales increased exponentially during 1999-2001, and text messaging became a highly popular 'new' form of communication. High Street shops existed solely as vendors of mobile phones (Harper 2002). Mobile use had entered arenas such as Parliament (The Guardian 2000), schools (BBC News 2000a) and the Wimbledon tennis tournament (Buckley 2000). Adults began to claim that they 'couldn't live without' or would be 'lost without' their mobile phone (BBC News 2000b). What various commentators have conceptualised as the 'Telecommunications Revolution' (BBC News 2000c), was in full swing. Oftel statistics demonstrate a steep rise in the adoption of mobile telephony in the UK during the period 1999-2001:

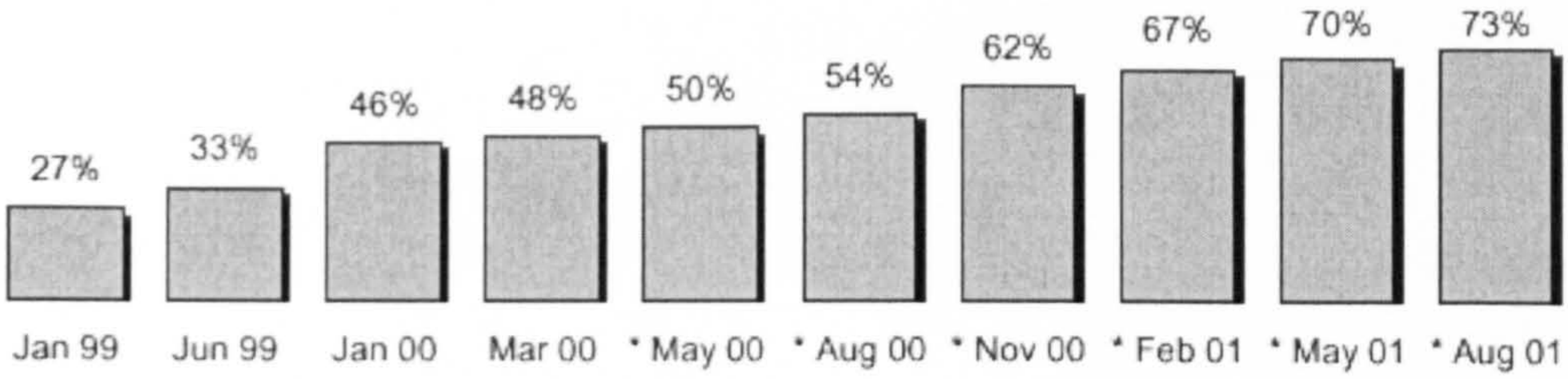


Figure 4.2: Mobile Phone Adoption 1999-2001 In The UK. (Asterisks denote inclusion of the population of Northern Ireland.) Source: Oftel survey (Oftel 2002).

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[4] The pre-pay system allowed young people to budget their expenditure; it also allowed under-18s to run a mobile for the first time. Access to contract mobiles is limited to over-18s with an acceptable credit history.

By the end of 2001, market penetration rate for the UK had reached 78.3%, with penetration in the adult sector almost at saturation point (International Telecommunication Union 2002: 11). Mobile telephony had achieved mass market status.

Its future possibilities were also anticipated (for example the taking and sending digital photographs via mobile phones, which was introduced into the UK in 2002). The launch of Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) technology prior to the so-called 'Third Generation' of mobile phones, began to allow increased services such as the texting of train timetable information to one's mobile phone (see for example GNER 2002). Cultural commentators began to perceive societies incorporating mobiles and mobility in general as 'nomadic' in nature (Haynes 1993), suggesting some sort of culture change compatible with the 'information society'.

It is true that patterns of working in the business world have shifted due to the availability of mobile telephony. The blurring of public/private, work/leisure, office/home boundaries has already been commented upon in terms of adjusting to new forms of unwritten 'etiquette' (for example Ling 1997). A slew of reports on alleged health scares connected to mobile phones highlights the resistance and fear experienced in relation to this new, increasingly popular technology. This thesis, however, rejects the possibility of speaking in such convoluted terms of a technology 'impacting' on culture, effecting 'changes' and 'shifts' in human behaviour, breaking down boundaries and altering the way we view our environment. It instead suggests, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, that a thorough examination of the behaviours of mobile phone users is necessary to gain an answer to this question, as presented in the next chapter.

Existing telephony studies, although limited, give an indication of the importance of both wired and wireless phones within society. It is thus easy to learn about ownership rates, but more difficult to comprehend how telephony is used within the UK, and what meanings are attached to it. By the end of the twentieth century, the POTS phone was an ordinary part of society, of 'quotidian importance to people everywhere' (Katz 1999b: 3). Mobile telephony is rapidly inheriting this mantle.

It is clear that both wired and wireless telephony are important in the working lives of UK citizens. Phones connect suppliers to customers, and provide telephone support for employees outside of the office. Despite the increasing popularity of email, telephony remains a prime mode of contact between employee and employer, producer and consumer. Secondly, and more complex to understand, telephony fulfils a role outside of the workplace. Used by people of all ages in a range of ways, phoning has an important domestic role to play, which has been extended outside the home via the 'mobile'.

Lacohee and Anderson (2001) present a nomenclature of wired telephone call types, including duty, arrangement, information, maintenance and grapevine calls. Perhaps the most widely used role fulfilled by non-business telephony is that of 'keeping in touch'. Being able to speak to friends and relatives over distance (even if they live relatively locally), is an important part of contemporary human interaction. Chatting, gossiping or simply passing on information via the telephone, is an integral part of UK society. Wireless telephony has meant that those without a wired phone, and people on the move, can also engage in these practices. Making arrangements by phone is another popular practice in the UK. Arranging a social event, childcare or dental appointment, for example, can easily be done using the phone. The phone is also useful in an 'emergency' – for calling the police, ambulance or fire brigade; for passing on information rapidly and directly.

It has been suggested that usage of telephony differs according to demographic categories such as gender (Moyal 1989) and age (Katz 1999b), external influences such as location (Standen 2001a) and types of cultural background and social behaviour (Umble 1992). There are studies that focus on the use of phones in different countries and different physical environments, that investigate software usability and handset design, and that have examined telephony within both domestic and business contexts, as Chapter 2 describes. None of these has as yet provided a comprehensive overview of the role of either the wired or wireless telephone in contemporary society, in terms of the uses and meanings attributed to a communications technology by those who use it. This thesis presents an interpretation of student use, approaching the mobile as an anthropological artefact, understood on many levels, but always as part of the population in which it is used, and in relation to existing social theory. There is of course scope for further research, as explored further in Chapter 9.

## 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the emergence of telephony in UK society; its changes over the decades; and a brief summary of how it is used and understood. The next two chapters contain information about universities and student life in England from the Middle Ages to 2001.

# Chapter 5 : A Social History of English Universities

## 5.1 Introduction

The nature of university life in England is highly specific. This is due, in part, to the historical emergence of the university as an institution with certain associated regulations and behaviours. This chapter presents the historical traditions and behaviours associated with English universities that persist today. It seeks to establish the institutional and cultural characteristics that have ensured university life has been set apart from the rest of society, and to provide the cultural context of university life that is missing from most literature on the educational system. A specific focus on the history and culture of the University of Newcastle is also presented. As explained in Chapter 3, the provision of history within an anthropological study is becoming increasingly accepted within the discipline, and the decision to include it is, in part, methodological. The ethnographer Moffatt, in his study of US college life, suggests that one can "use social historical methods to achieve distance on the cultural present" (Moffatt 1989: 23). The Newcastle University data, in particular, constitutes an interesting ethnohistory, particularly as certain aspects are sourced from a document produced by the population studied, The Courier (student newspaper). The chapter also provides evidence for the changing nature of the Newcastle population throughout history, and particularly in recent years; the understanding of which is necessary in understanding the role of mobile telephony amongst the contemporary individuals studied, as presented in Chapter 8.

## 5.2 English Universities – A History

In the 21st century, universities are a worldwide institution, with several hundred higher education institutions in the UK alone. The tradition of university education in England stretches back to the Middle Ages of European history (placed by historians as the 5th to the 15th centuries A.D.). 'University' has been defined as:

> "An institution organized and incorporated for the purpose of imparting instruction, examining students, and otherwise promoting education in the

> higher branches of literature, science, art, etc., empowered to confer degrees in the several arts and faculties, as in theology, law, medicine, music, etc. A university may exist without having any college connected with it, or it may consist of but one college, or it may comprise an assemblage of colleges established in any place, with professors for instructing students in the sciences and other branches of learning" (Webster's Unabridged Dictionary 1996).

A university is also, however, constituted by the people who belong to it, and their behaviours and attitudes. Although universities conform to the general standard described above, what it means to be a university, and what it means to attend university in England,[1] is specific to the country, and the history of its universities. The University of Newcastle upon Tyne is thus part of an institutional and student tradition that dates back to Medieval times. This historical unfolding of a place of education, and the expected behaviours of those attending it, is paramount in gaining an understanding of those characteristics associated with an English university such as Newcastle, and the undergraduates who study therein.

Academic education and schooling has a long history stretching back to Plato's Academy, established in the first century A.D., that "may be regarded as the first 'university'" (Bostock 1995: 683). Initially, this tradition tended to be without structure, with 'schooling' occurring intermittently, and on a temporary basis. It was also introduced as, and persisted as, a male domain, up until quite recently.

By Anglo-Saxon times,[2] a more formal definition of schooling had begun to occur in Western Europe. 'Schools' of learning existed in various regions of England, but did not include the provision of higher education, i.e. what is recognised today as university-level study. Towards the end of the Norman era, the (Roman Catholic)

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[1] Universities in Scotland (i.e. St Andrews and the University of Glasgow) emerged not long after those in England, and there are similar institutions in Wales and Northern Ireland, so it may have been possible to focus on a concept of a British university. As the thesis suggests, however, there are features of the English university that are not replicated elsewhere within the UK - specifically, the amount of students who travel further afield to attend an institution.

[2] There is no defined Anglo-Saxon time period, but Anglo-Saxon invasions began during the mid 5th century AD and the era is seen as finishing at the date of the Norman Conquest 1066.

Church established secondary and advanced theological schools, or *studia*, to provide religious teaching.

These *studia* were established on a regional basis and, although not universities as such, the existence of regional centres of learning, as opposed to one main institution, remains a trait of English higher education that has continued to the present day. Attendance at such institutions has, however, changed historically. Initially:

> "the twelfth-century student was a rootless person, wandering from one *studium* to another, attracted by the reputation of some particular master: it was only as the century advanced that settled communities of masters and scholars formed themselves. But these were still impermanent bodies, lacking buildings and fixed property" (Lawson 1967: 32).

Nevertheless, during the 13th century A.D. more formalised institutions emerged in Europe, such as Oxford and Cambridge in England; these conferred 'degrees' upon students who had passed the standards of study decreed necessary. The practice of granting degrees remains today, with structured courses of learning examined at set periods, and a qualification awarded that is recognised by the outside world. Women, excluded from the university process for centuries, were first awarded degrees at Girton College (for women) at the University of Cambridge in 1869 (Girton College 2002).

The buildings associated with English universities became increasingly important as time elapsed. Oxford and Cambridge became centres of teaching *and* residence - scholars began to live in lodging houses approved by the University, first termed 'Halls' by Oxford University (Oxford University 2002). These soon came under university control, and were later subsumed into the university colleges. By the 17th century, students were required to live in the college to which they were affiliated. The collegiate systems of Oxford and Cambridge still exist today, and it was not until later that campus universities were introduced (see below). Being provided with accommodation in a university away from one's place of origin, however, was the beginning of a tradition that persists in England today, and has implications for student life – that of living in Halls (again, discussed below).

Since its beginnings, higher education has relied on the payment of fees, sometimes offered in the form of patronage if unable to be provided by family. Organised at first

by the Church rather than the State, reliant on charity and patronage, university education thus tended to be limited to those from the middle classes and above. Emerging from Henry VIII's decision, the latter part of the Reformation involved the dissolution of theological colleges. Lawson (1967) suggests that by this stage the Church had little to do with education or its funding, and thus these colleges became absorbed by the academic community. By the post-war years of the twentieth century, students at English universities benefited from the introduction of government grants, although young people still missed out on attending a university if their families needed them to earn a living or help in the home.

During the Medieval era, scholars studied for a Master's degree in the Faculty of Arts, before moving to a faculty of Law, Medicine or Theology, and studying to become a Bachelor, Master or Doctor of this profession. The focus remained therefore on what today would be called 'postgraduate' or 'further' study. Nevertheless, being a member of the university involved 'matriculating' (having one's name on the roll book), and attending the lectures of the Master to which one was assigned (Lawson 1967; Keen 1968; Previte-Orton 1952). The importance of lectures at this time was paramount, mainly due to the lack and expense of written texts. Despite the wider provision of books, typed notes and electronic sources, lecturing remains the basis of university learning at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Bachelor degrees, in the Arts (BA) or Sciences (BSc), are usually awarded after three or four years study, depending on course structure.

A subtle yet profound change that occurred during Tudor rule was the shift in balance within English universities, which changed from postgraduate research residences into undergraduate teaching colleges. Undergraduates were assigned a personal tutor to guide them through University life, a practice that remains in place at Oxford and Cambridge today and has also been adopted by other universities including Newcastle. By the 17th century, the number of students attending Oxford and Cambridge at this time was the highest it had ever been. For the first time, those attending university were not necessarily focused on learning:

> "the universities underwent considerable laicisation; they also become much more the preserve of the rich and more class-conscious in their composition. Their function also came to be the education of young men whose studies stopped at or even before the B.A., few of whom had any intention of

> continuing to teach or study as regents. Consequently, the old scholastic curriculum had to be broadened to cater for the cultural education of gentlemen in a more secular and classical age" (Lawson 1967: 105).

In spite of, (or perhaps because of) this, the two universities began to take their role more seriously, and set revised higher educational standards. In the early 19th century, for example, Oxford University overhauled its curriculum and established the practice of awarding degrees in classes (i.e. I, IIi, IIii, III), another system which continues to be used within English universities today.

During the Victorian era, the existing universities of Oxford and Cambridge in England began to be accompanied by new, regional colleges established on a civic basis. University College, London (UCL) was founded in 1826. Durham University was officially recognized by Parliament in 1837. Owens College, later the University of Manchester, opened its doors to students in 1851. These early institutions were not necessarily recognised in their own right, however; they did not have the right to issue degrees for some time. The building materials used to construct these new colleges – red bricks as opposed to stone – led them to be labelled 'Redbrick' universities. (They were also known as 'civic', linked to a city rather than a patron). As usually only one college was established in each region, these institutions did not adapt the Oxbridge collegiate system, although they later expanded their sites into 'campuses', which housed Halls of Residence as well as buildings used for teaching:

> "The university took young students and provided them with good quality rooms in Halls of Residence where they would meet other students and have no domestic responsibilities. Their accommodation would be highly serviced with cleaning, linen service and catering services. Students lived in single-sex halls, which, as the 1970s progressed, saw some mixing of the sexes but normally with male and female residents certainly on separate corridors if not in separate blocks" (Blakey 1994: 72).

The Redbricks became an important part of the cities in which they were established, as in the case of the University of Newcastle, discussed below. New civic universities continued to be established during the 20th century at a high rate. By 1938 there were 50,000 university students in Britain. Expansion continued post-war, with the establishment of a system of financial grants from the government to fund university

education as part of the welfare state. Increasing student numbers helped established Redbricks as popular educational establishments. In time, the universities of Britain began to be part of its physical, intellectual, political and economic landscape, and attending university became something that was expected of academically gifted scholars.

During the 1960s, a 'new wave' of universities such as Sussex, Kent, Essex, York, East Anglia, Warwick, and Lancaster were established in England, often on newly constructed campuses outside of the urban area with which they were affiliated. In tune with societal changes in the post-war era, these new civic universities were beginning to offer something different than traditional places and modes of study. In 1968, plans for the introduction of twenty 'polytechnics' were drawn up. These were institutions to focus on more vocational forms of higher education, and were to be the responsibility of local political authorities. In 1992 they were redesignated 'new universities', in an attempt to emphasise the quality of education provided. Newcastle Polytechnic, for example, became the University of Northumbria at Newcastle (UNN). Towards the end of the twentieth century, the number of students in university education was at its highest. Despite the variety of institutions available, prestigious Redbrick universities such as Newcastle remained extremely popular. Government policy continued to encourage school-leavers to attend a higher education institution upon leaving school, although decisions to introduce tuition fees and abolish grants in order to make way for student loans have been predicted to cause an eventual downturn in university attendance. More students attend university now than they ever have:

> "Where it was once thought exceptional to win a place at university, was a guaranteed sign of academic and social advance and a just occasion for celebration, today it merely marks a stage in life, requiring no special academic merit, signalling in itself no great likelihood of greater success" (Smith and Webster 1997: 2).

In conjunction with the popularity of universities as institutions, and the changes in their funding and structure, commentators have begun to comment on the era of the 'post-modern' (Scott 1997) or 'changing' (Haselgrove 1994) university, which became a key theme of this thesis. As Chapter 2 discusses, however, there is limited data on how such changes affect the lives of students. Data regarding the lives of students themselves in the historical material is similarly scarce. Early university scholars were

apparently closely tied to the Church and its teachings, and lived as ascetics; life at university was confined in the main to study. Gradually, a more social aspect has been found in university life. Social historians have discovered that:

> "soon after 1660 there were complaints by Commonwealth dons of the licence and frivolity of the new 'cavalier' students, who wasted their time at plays, taverns and coffee houses" (Lawson and Silver 1973: 168).

Such information gives the first inkling of any type of student culture beyond that of religious, diligent scholars studying in a professional manner. Reports on the influx of undergraduates in this post-medieval era gives the first suggestion of university as a 'finishing school' for the rich, whose families would pay for them to attend whilst they engaged in extra-curricular activities such as drinking, having fun, and taking part in dog and horse racing.

These more informal elements of student social life have been subject to change over the years, but have continued in some form or other until the present day. The thesis suggests that their presence in university life is paramount to the contemporary student experience. A socio-historical overview of the University of Newcastle is thus presented below, to provide background to, and contrast with, the nature of the contemporary student experience at Newcastle, outlined in Chapter 6. This section has provided the English cultural context for the emergence of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and highlighted the institutional regulations and behaviours relevant to it.

## 5.3 The University of Newcastle upon Tyne – A History

The character and characteristics of the history and culture of Newcastle University require contextualisation with the emergence and evolution of higher education over the years. The concept of what in terms of this thesis shall be recognised as 'student life' can be viewed in many forms throughout time and space.

The origins of the University of Newcastle stretch back to 1834, when a Medical School was established in the north of the city of Newcastle as part of the existing University of Durham. In 1852, following some changes in structure and location, this became "the Newcastle upon Tyne College of Medicine in connection with the University of Durham" (Bettenson 1971: 14). A tradition of excellence in the field of medicine persists in the University to this day, although in time the college diversified

into other areas of higher education teaching and research. In 1871, a College of Physical Science was established in the city, and later a Faculty of Arts.

During the early twentieth century, these centres of learning were still referred to as 'the Newcastle colleges' of Durham University. Their growth meant that in 1914 a Union Society was established in the vicinity, which soon provided rooms where food, coffee and alcoholic drinks were served, and entertainments held. In 1937 the Newcastle colleges became incorporated into 'King's College in the University of Durham'.

The provision of post-war grants to attend university spurred on an increase in admissions to King's College, Newcastle from 1945 onwards. It developed a large proportion of the area that it occupies today after the Second World War. The University website states that "sustained expansion since 1945 has resulted in the development of a modern University campus" (Newcastle University 2002a).

During the post-war years, the King's College retained many of the traditional features associated with universities as institutions. Students were expected to attend lectures in the expected dress of the period (suits for men and twin-sets for women), accompanied by an academic gown. Men wore blazers and ties which displayed the college colours, and both genders wore scarves displaying whichever colour was relevant to the Faculty in which they were enrolled. Buying daytime and evening formalwear could be difficult, as clothing was both expensive and scarce following World War II. Dressing smartly remained imperative to university students for many years, however, despite the subsequent emergence of counterculture fashion associated with the jazz, rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll music scenes.[3]

During the 1950s, it was common practice for the majority of King's College students not from the area to dwell in lodgings rented from landladies, either in the city or in the nearby coastal area of Whitley Bay; this is in stark contrast to housing patterns today. Although many students lived locally, a substantial proportion had travelled from other

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[3] Where this and subsequent historical data is not directly sourced, this is due to it being the author's interpretation of all articles, advertisements, letters and photographs contained within all available archived editions of The Courier (the student newspaper of the University of Newcastle) from its inception in 1948 to the present day, and the Tyne Tees documentary 'Redbrick' (1996), made in 1984.

regions to attend the college on the basis of its academic reputation, a practice that has increased throughout the twentieth century. Some students shared private flats; there were a few rooms in University accommodation, but living in 'digs' was the most popular accommodation. University accommodation at this time was firmly supervised, with a former Henderson Hall student reminiscing that "Hall, with the community living and restrictions on freedom it suggested to me, seemed a little too much like a painful reminder of Army days" (The Courier February 1958). Eventually, petitions for increased University accommodation made by the student body (or at least its student newspaper) were answered. In 1959, shared flats for 30 (male) students in Osborne Road, Jesmond were established by the University, with further accommodation to follow throughout the decades.

Government grants provided eligible students with a limited income, enabling them to pay for rent, clothing, food and occasional entertainment. The Union Society continued to provide a communal space for students to meet, and to engage in the extra-curricular aspects of student life that have continued to colour it since. Entertainment did not, however, play as large a part in student life as it does today. There was a more rigorous emphasis on study, and very few forms of entertainment to choose from or afford. Subsidised events such as 'hops', sing-songs, debates, bridge games, gramophone recitals and a bar which served beer could be found at the Union at weekends. Students tended to dine in the Union or their lodgings. The Union remained for some time a gender-specific space - the 'Men's Bar' in the Union could only be used by men;[4] communal areas such as the 'Bun Room', and a separate women's area, existed elsewhere. Films, plays, classical and jazz concerts and dances at city venues were also popular. An annual 'Freshers' Conference' was launched, whereby new undergraduates were given a tour of the University, attended introductory lectures, went to a formal Ball and visited the sister university at Durham.

King's College finally became the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1963, during the Redbrick heyday. An important move at this time was the purchase of local buildings near to the University such as the whole of Leazes Terrace, which continues

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[4] A 'Mens Bar' (*sans* apostrophe) still exists today. Courier archives clearly show it was originally named on gender lines, although it was adapted to stand for *Mens Agitat Molem* in the more 'politically correct' 1990s.

to provide student accommodation today. Student life also began to change in other ways. Dress became less formal, with shirts, jeans, miniskirts, dresses, turtle-neck and 'skinny-rib' sweaters and drainpipe trousers largely replacing suits and ties; the practice of wearing gowns to lectures was much less adhered to. Boundaries between University life and other young people in the UK, such as the 'hippy' scene of Newcastle's Handyside Arcade, began to be eroded by students.

By March 1966, 44.3% of all Newcastle students lived in privately rented lodgings or flats; 28.2% lived with parents; and 27.0% of the entire student population lived in student residences. Private accommodation was most popular because there was so much of it compared to the limited housing provided by the University – hundreds of students continued to commute (by bus) from Whitley Bay. Hall social events took place, including the performance of Hall plays and the hosting of Hall Balls. Where one lived did not depend on one's year of study (as it does in later years), but Halls were gender-specific (Aldis House, Eustace Percy, and Henderson Hall were catered, male-only Halls; Ethel Williams and Easton Hall catered women-only Halls; and Embleton, Garnett and Gurney student houses were self-catered and for men).[5] Henderson, with TV rooms and sports fields, was the most modern Hall – with the most expensive rent charges.

The Union continued to thrive, hosting live bands, keep-fit classes, 'raves'[6] and discotheque nights, where students danced to records in the hit parade. In the city, live music in nightclubs, espresso bars and milk bars were popular with students as well as locals. Both genders became admitted to the Men's Bar on alternate weeknights and Saturdays. From early on in the 1960s, undergraduate life at Newcastle University was no longer focused on merely studying for one's degree, but also involved engaging in an increasing number of social activities. Traditional forms of entertainment such as classical recitals still occurred, but many Newcastle students were participating in new events that were helping establish the 'youth' and 'student' behaviours observed by

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[5] Most of these residences continue to offer accommodation to Newcastle students today (Ethel Williams has since been demolished). By 1979 they were no longer gender-specific.

[6] 1960s 'raves' involved dancing to live guitar bands and were fairly formal in nature; they differ from the more recent UK 'rave' scene of 'acid house' which featured technologically produced music, hallucinogens, large, heaving crowds and an 'anything goes' atmosphere.

cultural commentators. The availability of a wider variety of alcoholic drinks in the Union bar, and recreational drugs within society at large, was also part of this process of change. Nevertheless, student life at this time was not all about entertainment; most undergraduates did not have much money, and little access to credit facilities. Although grants became index-linked to the standard of living, students remained relatively poor, and were unlikely to afford consumer items.

Going to university, particularly a Redbrick remained, however, a popular experience at this time. During the latter part of the 1960s, further physical expansion occurred at the University of Newcastle - northwards and eastwards, near to the city's Civic Centre. At this time, the University changed so much, that, apparently, "a list of the new appointments and buildings from 1946 to 1970 would be tedious" (Bettenson 1971: 60). From 1970 onwards, the University continued to expand its building programme, to cater for higher numbers of students in a diversity of subjects. Student housing also became a priority, with the University finally agreeing to house every first year student, building new student flats on the nearby Richardson Road during the 1970s. Bettenson states that:

> "Senate undoubtedly hoped that it would be an attraction when in 1976-77 it felt able to guarantee that any student formally offered a place in the University should also be guaranteed a place in a university residence" (Bettenson 1987: 13).

In reality, this move had serious implications for life at the University. As well as bringing all first years together in Halls and flats, those currently living in Halls were encouraged to move out into shared private accommodation. These practices changed the nature of student life and remain in place today, as Chapter 6 demonstrates.

Student life remained largely informal at this time. Despite the resurgence of more formal, stylish modes of dressing with the establishment of High Street stores such as *Next*, students displayed a preference for cheaper, practical clothing. The Union increased its (financially subsidised) entertainment programme with a Tuesday disco, Wednesday folk or jazz night and a host of occasional music events on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. City venues such as The Mayfair and the newly established Newcastle Polytechnic also played host to a variety of live bands. Students as a group, and the viability of the 'student pound', were also beginning to be noticed by retailers.

National student discounts for the cinema, and local student discounts from certain shops and restaurants, were introduced in 1977. Student financial concerns were important at this time; without credit facilities students had difficulty balancing their budgets. Education cuts introduced by the national government[7] caused many students to participate in strikes and demonstrations against these and the government in general, during the 1970s. Their concern about this and other issues such as race, sexuality, gender equality and cruelty to animals, led students to be identified as increasingly political (and increasingly left-wing) during this decade.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the University continued its development, expanding further north into the city, with "a vigorous building programme over the last 30 years" that included a new main library, Medical School and Dental School (Newcastle University 2002a). At this time, a national 'student identity' had become recognised (and stereotyped), involving practical anti-fashions such as Doc[tor] Marten boots and Army fatigue or 'combat' trousers, an interest in 'alternative' music and politics, and an increasingly limited income[8]. The student contingent in the UK was thus markedly separate from the rest of the population, behaviourally, and physically - the Redbrick campus provided a student enclave, as did Halls and student 'villages' or 'ghettos' within the city.

During the 1980s, the practice of living out in student flats or houses in the city centre came to represent a specific stage at the University. University accommodation was largely reserved for first year students; subsequent years were expected to 'live out', and renting city centre housing to these students became common (Whitley Bay regained its status as a holiday resort rather than as a place where students live, possibly due to their desire to live nearer to the central University hub). By 1982, 49% of students living out resided in Benwell and Fenham, areas to the west of the city that contained housing affordable to those on a grant. The Brighton Grove area of Fenham,

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[7] By the country's Prime Minister-to-be, Margaret Thatcher, who remained unpopular with a high proportion of students when she took office as premier in 1979.

[8] It is difficult to explain what is meant by 'alternative', as it can be taken to mean anything that is not viewed as 'mainstream.' From the 1970s onwards, however, it has been associated with the [anti] fashions of 'punk', 'new wave', 'rock', 'grunge' and some forms of 'dance' music, with clubs hosting 'alternative' nights.

in particular, represents the then-dominant form of student life at the University. This 'West End' scene was associated with house parties, and the consumption of illegal drugs, alternative fashion and vegetarian food (the Red Herring Cafe and health food shop, on Studley Terrace off Brighton Grove, was the area's epicentre). Such 'alternative' behaviours became identified with the Newcastle undergraduate population, *and* the wider context, as caricatured in the BBC TV programme 'The Young Ones', with its fictional characters Rick the left-winger, Neil the hippie and Vyvyan the punk (and their antithesis Mike, a mature student whose behaviours are contrastingly 'normal').

At this time, the Union was popular for its provision of live music and discos, its new video showings and a gym/jacuzzi/solarium centre called 'The Last Resort'. During the 1980s, however, a proliferation of venues in the city was competing for the student market. Discotheques of the type more commonly known today as nightclubs (with DJs playing pre-recorded music) opened in the city, and were attended by some students. At the beginning of the decade, students were likely to inhabit some of the more pop-oriented venues such as *Julie's, Legends* and *Madisons* (a national chain, later *Ritzy*, later *Ikon*), but soon became more associated with 'alternative' nights at places including *Rockshots* and *Riverside.*

In 1980, the student railcard was introduced, and in 1981, National Express coaches launched a student discount. In 1984, the first on-campus bank opened at the University of Newcastle. By 1986, as well as offering free gifts to encourage students to bank with them, High Street banks had introduced £200 interest-free overdrafts. Grants continued to be lowered, and student spending generally remained focused on necessities rather than luxuries - The Last Resort offered cheap bath and shower facilities so students could save money on their electricity bills, and getting a taxi home following a night out was not a usual practice.

Ultimately, however, these dominant student (anti) fashions and consumption behaviours gradually began to be replaced, evolving into those of the contemporary population which are presented in detail in Chapter 6. An alternative scene existed during the early and mid-1990s, embracing the 'grunge' movement in music and fashion, but an increasing number of students were becoming interested in shopping in High Street stores, and displaying a different sort of style. Concurrent with other young people in UK society, some students (particularly those interested in the nascent

'dance' music scene) had begun to wear stylish but casual clothing, such as tracksuit jackets, hooded tops and trainers. Student fashion was becoming less about function, practicality and dressing down. Attending live music events remained important for some students, but 'going clubbing' was increasingly popular, with dance music and DJ (disc jockey) nights increasing in number. An increase in crime levels during the 1990s contributed to the decreasing popularity of Fenham as an area of residence, with students turning instead to Heaton, Gosforth and Jesmond, even though rents were more expensive in these locations. The 'Student Loans' system was introduced, and Local Education Authority grants were phased out. Interest-free overdrafts of up to £1000 were common for Newcastle undergraduates, with banks competing to offer them the 'best' deal. Debt began to be an ordinary part of life for Newcastle University students.

Throughout the twentieth century, both the University as an institution, and the lives of and its undergraduates, have undergone various changes as presented in this section. The University as an institution, and the demographics and behaviours of the undergraduate population, were subject to further change post-1998. Chapter 6 focuses on the current phase of the University, in particular the everyday lives of its students. Chapter 8 suggests that the changed nature of student life is strongly associated with the use and meaning of mobile phones at the University of Newcastle.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the important developments in English universities, and enables institutional regulations and behaviours to be viewed. It presents traditions of the English university that have been maintained throughout history, such as the provision of both research and teaching aspects; the conferral of degrees in classes; the maintenance of colleges at Oxbridge; the practice of residing within or near to the university; and an emphasis on undergraduate teaching. These elements enable enhanced understanding of the university system, and the role of undergraduate students. The chapter has also presented a focused overview of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne over the past five decades, both in terms of the institution, and the associated behaviours of students. This is provided in part to distance the ethnographic present from images in the past, but also, conversely, to provide contextual background to the contemporary population that is explored in

Chapter 6 and is demonstrated in Chapter 8 to be imperative in understanding the role of mobile telephony amongst students.

# Chapter 6 : Student Life at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of student life at the University of Newcastle using ethnographic data from the study. Survey, interview and observational information has been compiled to form an overview of student life at the University, 1999 to 2001. The important aspects in student life, as identified by undergraduates themselves, are demonstrated below. The previous chapter provided an historical overview of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the behaviours of undergraduates to provide both context and distance between the past and the present. The next chapter will focus exclusively on the relationships between students and mobile phones, again drawing from the study data.

## 6.2 An Ethnography of Student Life

### 6.2.1 Introduction

Although historical works regarding higher education institutions exist, there is little ethnographic examination of the culture of universities over time, as Chapter 2 discusses. More students than ever are enrolling at university, but this stage in life, which can be perceived as a *rite de passage,* has not been explored in the UK from the perspective of students themselves. The University of Newcastle is part of the tradition of English Redbrick universities; it also has its own idiosyncrasies. Explored in conjunction with students themselves, undergraduate life is seen by the thesis to correspond to a core set of behaviours within the Newcastle University context. It is also clear that this has become, over time, inextricably connected to life external to the institutional context, in particular, what has been termed 'youth culture'.

This thesis suggests that being an undergraduate student at Newcastle is not merely about enrolling in the institution, studying for a degree and following its rules. Other aspects, such as socialising, also have a part to play. The day-to-day behaviours of students at Newcastle are thus presented in this chapter as they were viewed during the

research process. The importance and modes of socialising; who one lives with and where; life on campus and within academic departments; changes that take place during one's university career as part of leaving home/becoming independent; finance and consumption; romantic relationships; and the securing of part-time employment, are all shown to be important aspects of student life. These aspects prove crucial in discussing the adoption, use and meaning of mobile telephony by the population concerned.

### 6.2.2 The University of Newcastle upon Tyne

At the time of writing, Newcastle University remains situated at the north end of the contemporary city centre of Newcastle upon Tyne. It consists of a largely contained 'campus' of University buildings, that extend out above the city centre to the Royal Victoria Infirmary (the University teaching hospital) and St James' Park football stadium. These buildings include that of lecture theatres, seminar rooms, the Union Society, the Robinson Library, several museums, an art gallery, the Open Access Centre (for languages) and two theatres. The University buildings range from imposing Redbrick structures, to more modern tower blocks, and their locations are criss-crossed by city streets, various pathways and a motorway bypass (circumnavigated by a bridge leading to the Robinson Library and the Politics and Law Departments). The Union and old (Redbrick) Quadrangle remain central features, with various Departmental buildings and areas constructed within a wide radius from them. Despite this scope, as the University website used to boast, it is possible to walk across campus in ten minutes. There are also centres off-campus for the study of agriculture and marine science, including Close House, also the site of the University's golf course. (A map of the University campus and accompanying photographs can be located in the Appendix.)

For purposes of the research conducted for this thesis, the University needs to be viewed in terms of seven educational faculties – Agricultural and Biological Sciences; Arts; Education; Engineering; Law, Environment and Social Sciences; Medicine; and

Science.[1] These are divided into academic departments, ascribed physical space on the University campus, which offer 220 taught degree courses, as well as engaging in research. The University has thus remained "one of the larger 'redbrick' Universities with a typical range of subjects for teaching and research" (Bettenson 1987: 21). During the academic year[2] 2001-2, 15,270 students were enrolled at the University, with 12,216 of these being undergraduates, and 4,480 of these being new first-year students, or 'Freshers'.

Undergraduate teaching takes place at the University in the form of lectures, seminars and individual study. Some courses, such as Medicine, involve vocational training; laboratory-based classes in scientific subjects involve large amounts of practical work. The amount of hours scheduled for a student's timetable varies according to the degree course studied. Seminars are offered as an accompaniment to lectures, and consist of a group of students engaged in a tutorial with a member of faculty staff or teaching assistant. These usually involve individual and/or group study, and presentations. Undergraduate assessment usually occurs via a combination of coursework essays and examination. The University has a good academic reputation, scoring well in quality assessments for both research and teaching.

Other facilities offered at the University include the University Centre for Physical Education and Sport; an award-winning Careers Service; regular public access musical concerts; a Chaplaincy; a mosque; and a medical centre, dentist and counselling service. The University also houses information and advice centres for mature students and international students. It has its own orchestra, and for the past couple of years it has hosted its own radio station, Newcastle Student Radio ('NSR'), that broadcasts twice a year on 107.5 FM, and is run by students themselves.

The Union Society (known colloquially as 'the Union') is an important political and social part of the university. It is housed in a four storey red brick building, with features including white facades and a central bell tower and clock. Both the scale of

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[1] During 2002, the University of Newcastle underwent a restructuring process to streamline its faculties and departments. This involved little physical change for campus buildings, but new administrative faculties and 'schools' were created for the academic year 2002-3.

[2] Academic years in England begin in September and end in August.

the entire Union building, and the number of separate areas within it, are imposing. Areas inside and outside provide meeting places for undergraduates. It houses centres offering information, advice, insurance and student jobs, a unisex hairdressing salon, second hand bookshop, and Post Office. It also contains the small office of The Courier student newspaper, as well as the offices of all those involved in running the political and social aspects of the Union Society, in its role as a (National Union of Students-affiliated) Student Union.

During the day, students eat, drink and meet in the Union building, and utilise the shops and services available. Outside of peak lecture times, and especially at mealtimes, it can be filled with large numbers of students, singly and in groups, stationary and in transit. It provides a central meeting place, particularly for first years who do not have other communal spaces to use, such as within their own homes.

> "Me and the girls that live here did the same subjects, so we spent a lot of time together, and we'd always go after our first lectures, to have breakfast and something to eat in the Union. And I think now, because everyone can come back home, in the first year the Union was very much a meeting point instead of going back to Halls. Everyone would go to the café, and people would be coming in and out, and you always knew that people that you would know, there'd be someone up there, if you did go up, get a sandwich, whatever" – Francesca.

The Union provides a variety of areas where food is served - each offers a slightly different experience. There is the large, brightly coloured Global café, the small Martin Luther King Café, the (non-smoking) Cochrane Lounge with its plush red seating, and 'The Bassment',[3] a large area underneath the building set out with trestle tables (and with the feel of a school canteen) during the day. A variety of food is on offer – hot and cold, breakfasts, lunches and snacks. In the evening these places also double as bars (the Global, the Cochrane Lounge) and music venues (The Bassment, complete with mirror-ball and lighting rig), in addition to the drinks-only Mens Bar. These are

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[3] 'Bassment' is spelled in this way (rather than as 'basement') as the name is a pun, referencing the 'bass' sound represented in the dance music played within the venue.

popular undergraduate night-time haunts, particularly on a Friday, and provide variation on the common theme of listening to music and having a drink.

> "There's the Global and then the Bassment, and they're both quite different, so if you wanna sit down and just chill, the Global's quite good, and if you wanna dance to cheese and stuff, the Bassment's just perfect!" – Lucie.

There are also soft drinks machines, cigarette machines, a photo booth and internal and external phones on the ground floor. Other social areas are available elsewhere on the University campus, such as the Robinson Library café, The Playhouse café-bar, departmental common rooms and the coffee lounge in the Old Library building[4], but the Union provides the central campus hub. The contrast between the inhabited building during term-time, and its quiet emptiness outside of term-time, is vast; the busy hubbub of noise is replaced by silence.

During the evening, the Union hosts a variety of events including quiz and curry nights, music from bands and DJs, and offers on alcohol, providing good value entertainment for students throughout the week, with an especial focus on a Friday night. The Friday event is cheaper than going to a club night elsewhere in the city at the weekend, and has a late night licence. Posters advertising evening events are found throughout the building. Social societies, of which there are over a 100, are also based at the Union. Some are academically affiliated, such as the Hellenic Society; others provide cultural or religious support, such as the Malaysian Society; the remainder are more social or sports-based in nature, such as the Guinness and Real Ale Society, and the Fellwalking Society.

### 6.2.3 The Individuals

Lucie, Amanda, Jude, Rebecca, Francesca, Phillippa, Imogen, Isobel, Michael, Leo, Chris, Kirsty, Joshua, Michelle, Rafael, Stephen, Samantha, Alex, Amy, Abigail, Jack, Tom, Jodie and James are all students at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne that were interviewed for this study.[5] Aged between 18 and 24 at the time of the survey, they represent the full range of years of study from this time. They all have different

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[4] Called the 'Post Grad Coffee lounge', but open to all students and staff.

[5] All students are anonymised.

personalities, are enrolled on different degree courses and have different interests, but they and their peers have helped construct an impression of contemporary undergraduate life at Newcastle University. Their voices, behaviours and experiences emerge individually at times within the data, and also combine to create a general sense of university life as understood and represented by the thesis. Further information regarding these individuals, their backgrounds, and their role within the University, is contained in the appendix to the main body of the thesis. No other information regarding the individuals who completed a survey or were observed or participated in informal anthropological interviews is available, but their behaviours and experiences are also important and have contributed to the data below.

### 6.2.4 Starting University

There are a variety of ways that new students can get to know each other during the first few weeks at an English university. One important way is during the 'Freshers' Week' which takes place just before the official beginning of term, and marks a *rite de passage* between school leaver and matriculated student. Freshers' Week tends to occur at most universities and colleges in some format. Established during the 1940s at Newcastle University in the form of the 'Freshers' Conference', it is now called the 'First Year Conference', or 'FYC'. This consists of a week of social events organised by those already having spent at least a year at the University, who have been elected officers in the Student Union for this purpose. During FYC, a variety of events take place, to introduce students to the University, and to each other. When the University was based on a smaller scale, this would include introductory lectures and departmental tours, but now, the emphasis is mainly on social events, many of which tend to revolve around an introduction to large numbers of other students, in areas where it is traditional to consume alcohol, such as Hall bars, pubs or the Union. This enables strangers to get to know each other in a relaxed environment, where alcohol consumption reduces inhibitions. According to Lucie:

> "As soon as everybody's had a drink or two, and so on, then everybody tends to, like, chat really easily so it's fine."

Yet this shift in emphasis to mainly social activities can give Freshers the impression (due to its emphasis on frequent socialising and provision of alcohol) that this type of behaviour is the main aspect of student life. It is traditional that during this first week

at University the more serious aspects of being a student are avoided, as first years get to know places and people. There is often alcohol involved. Jude found the FYC pub crawl useful in getting to grips with a new city:

> "For about the first half-hour, yeah, and then I started drinking too much."

Michael remembers Freshers' Week as 'a bit of a blur', particularly one pub crawl:

> "There was one - huge one, that shot up to the rotunda car park at *Eldon Square* [shopping centre], so that's, *The Hotspur*'s [a pub] up that way, then it came back round the *Co-op* building, through the *Bigg Market*, all the bars there, down to *Mosley* [Street] and *Grey Street*, and then down the *Quayside* [area], so at the end of the night you'd end up at *The Boat* [a nightclub] and you'd be in a right state."

The social activities of FYC do integrate students and encourage them to meet new people and make friends. Rebecca did not attend any events during FYC because she was suffering with 'flu, and subsequently found that this a problem when it came to getting to know people:

> "Because they'd all, in that first week people had made their friends, and they'd made their people they were going to go clubbing with or whatever, so then I kind of like, afterwards, had to infiltrate..."

This suggests that those who find it difficult to attend FYC – such as local students living outside of the city – may find it excludes them from becoming fully involved with those who live centrally, in Halls. Aspects of this problem are discussed further in section 6.2.17 below.

The other primary means of getting to know other students is within the accommodation provided for first years by Newcastle University. The majority of 18 to 24 year old students at Newcastle (87.4% of the population studied) live away from their family home when at the University. Most rent rooms in University residences during their first year of study. Newcastle University now "guarantee[s] all first-year students a place in University-managed accommodation" (Newcastle University 2002b). 33.9% of undergraduates responding to the survey live in this type of accommodation. Most of these are first years.

Living in Halls, and its associated behaviours, as described below, plays a customary part in being a new undergraduate student at Newcastle. It is a contributory factor to the majority of students experiencing their initial year at the University in similar ways, in contrast to those who, up until the late 1970s, were as likely to reside in privately rented accommodation as University accommodation, irrespective of their year of study (and thus have widely different experiences). Jude had chosen to rent private accommodation in his first year, and as such felt that he had missed out in getting to know a wider range of people other than those from his course:

> "Definitely! Because, whereas people in Halls knew Medics and people doing other courses I've basically just known Medics for my whole university life. And like the odd other person."

Similarly, Abigail and her boyfriend both moved up from Newcastle together, and she did not really become involved in the standard first year experience:

> "I wasn't in Halls of Residence; I was in a [private] flat. I don't know, I probably didn't mingle in the student life thing as much, probably I was more friends with people who I worked with a lot more. I had close friends at Uni, but I just didn't do the Student Union thing and stuff."

There are both catered Halls of Residence at the University, and several non-catered student accommodation buildings. Castle Leazes and Henderson Hall are catered Halls; Richardson Road, Windsor Terrace, Leazes Parade, St Mary's College and Bowsden Court provide self-catered student flats; Leazes Terrace contains self-catering student houses. These comprise 4,100 rooms in all (Newcastle University 2002b). Life within catered Halls (as opposed to non-catered accommodation) tends to be more institutionalised, with routine times for meals, and cleaners attending the rooms. These residences contain large numbers of students in blocks, corridors or flats.

Living in Halls is where the majority of first year students get to know one another and make friends:

> "Halls were fantastic at the very beginning, because there was, you just met so many people! There were so many people in Halls, you just met so many new people every day, were introduced to people they'd met on their course, people on your corridor, and people on people's corridors - just so many people! And

then people sort of formed proper friendship groups. People worked out who they actually did get on with and who they didn't" – Francesca.

Who one becomes friends with is an important part of how one is defined in relation to others. The other students one initially eats dinner with, sleeps near and socialises with in one's residence can remain primary acquaintances, and sometimes lead to close friendships which are continued by choosing to 'live out' with close friends from Halls in one's subsequent years of study (see the next section). Friendship groups, usually of between 2 and 12 people, form in Halls over time. Students generally befriend those who they feel closest to on their corridor; those in flats have to hope that they have an affinity with one or more of their flatmates. Freshers sometimes meet coursemates who also happen to live in the same Hall, and use this shared commonality to get to know one another better. Thus, although who one lives amongst during one's first year is largely controlled by central administration, who one befriends evolves through the process of spending time together, and can provide a variety of acquaintances:

"There were the girls in my corridor, about 8 of us, who always had dinner together. Kelly, Jo, Emma were my closest friends. Another 4, who we all just tended to eat together, or go and have a cup of tea. And then a couple of guys from my course who were in the same Halls as well" – Jodie.

Getting to know others in Halls remains a difficult process for some, however. First year students in Halls do not live in households, but in (mainly single) study-bedrooms, with communal space spent in bathrooms, kitchens, dining rooms and corridors. Some find this quite isolating. The policy of Newcastle University accommodation being primarily available for first year undergraduates means that there is less mixing between the different University years in student accommodation than there was previously. Halls can provide a community, but not of the sort to be found in earlier years, which would, for example, put on dramatic productions. Student residences can consist of hundreds of individuals with different interests and beliefs; making friends in this environment is not necessarily an easy, immediate process.

Friends of friends (or acquaintances of acquaintances) are another way of making friends in Halls. A substantial number of students have existing contacts at the University from the same school or area of parental residence. Particularly in the case of independent school students, and those on a 'gap year' or 'year out' in between

leaving school and beginning university, undergraduates are liable to stumble upon a network of schoolmates or people they had met travelling, as Francesca experienced:

> "I went off travelling in my gap year, met a couple of people just randomly dotted around that were going to Newcastle...they happened to be in Castle Leazes, so [I] just chatted to them."

The gap year allows students to defer university entry until the subsequent academic year, and is becoming more common. It gives students the opportunity to earn money and/or travel, to experience things differently, or simply to take a break from thirteen years in education:

> "When I came to University, I thought no one will have taken a gap year, I'm gonna be really old compared to everyone else...and I'd say, more than half had taken gap years. There seems to be fewer and fewer people coming straight from school. I took one, personally, because I was a bit bored of studying, I wanted some time out, I thought I can't cope with anymore working! So that's what I did. I think a lot of people just want to see the world. Cos I don't suppose they've been many places" – Samantha.

> "When you've had a year away from it, it's much more exciting than if you've just finished your A-levels and had the summer off, kind of thing" – Abigail.

Such time out from education is endorsed by the university admissions board UCAS, whose chief executive Tony Higgins has stated that "students who take a well-planned structured year out are more likely to be satisfied with, and complete, their chosen course. The benefits of a well-structured year out are now widely recognised by universities and colleges and cannot fail to stand you in good stead in later life" (Year Out Group 2002). It can also provide students with existing contacts once they reach their university of choice. James, in his final year, did not get to know anyone during his first month or two in Castle Leazes, but subsequently met someone there that he had known in Australia during his gap year.

Networks of students from one's school or Sixth Form College[6] can also exist at the University of Newcastle - this is not exclusive to the independent school sector, but is more likely to occur here:[7]

> "I used to meet a few people here, a few people there, then they introduced me to these people, and then you end up saying, 'Oh My God, you're my brother's best friend's cousin's sister's –' you know, everyone knows each other in a funny sort of way. Or somebody knows someone they emailed, or someone went to school with their friend...In public schools it's very common that if you meet someone from any public school you'll say 'Yeah, I know him, I knew your best friend because he was in my House'...like I know someone from *Radley* [major public school in Oxfordshire], I know about 50 odd people from *Radley*, just friends from home, and people you meet at rugby matches, or people you meet here and there, on the gap year. When I was in Australia I met about 10 people from *Wellington College* [major public school in Berkshire], 5 or 6 people from *Radley*, people from *Harrow* [major public school near London], *Eton* [major public school in Berkshire], everyone. On the other side of the world. It's such a small world, especially in that social group" – James.

The location and type of residence can be a factor in student socialising during this initial year. Different individual and group experiences can take place, dependent on where one chooses or is allocated to live. St Mary's College in Fenham, and Henderson Hall in High Heaton, have been described as self-contained communities largely constrained to on-site socialising, as buses and taxis are needed to travel into town. Other sites such as Leazes Terrace, Castle Leazes and Richardson Road are relatively close to the University campus, and thus it is easier to spend time at the Union, a key location for taking part in student socialising. The smaller residences, such as Henderson and the now-defunct Ethel Williams, are also reputed to be more friendly and 'cosy', providing a pleasant community base outside of the town, in

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[6] 'Sixth Form' refers to the two final years of study for those who continue in education, to study for the A-level examinations required to attend university. Where such facilities are not provided by secondary schools, students usually attend a Sixth Form College or other type of college providing A-level courses.

[7] Possibly due to the high percentage of independent school students who go on to higher education, and/or the popularity of Newcastle University with the independent school sector.

contrast to Castle Leazes which is, according to Michael, 'a hive of people milling around.'[8]

Most Newcastle University residences tend to have some social facilities, such as a TV room, gym, and bar. The catered halls do not, however, have small, private social spaces such as sitting rooms that groups of students can use in their own manner, and this can lead to frustration. Having to socialise outside of one's home, rather than in a relaxed and casual manner, can place a strain on formative relationships. Not being able to share a lounge or prepare one's own food are cited as reasons why students are glad to be moving into privately rented accommodation in subsequent years:

> "The novelty of having your food cooked for you, the fact that there wasn't much space, your own kitchen, in your room, became a bit limiting towards the end. In that sense, you spend a lot more time out, just because you don't really want to spend too long inside" – Jodie.

Students have also commented on the nature of some University accommodation, which they perceive to be of a low standard:

> "It's a prison. You've got breeze blocks on the wall, painted, the carpets like brown and it's hard, the bed's tiny and broken, I mean the shelves were like, that [motions small horizontal space] far apart so you couldn't put books on them...the shower was just a room... there was just a shower in the corner with a curtain going across the shower. It was awful. The kitchen was tiny, and with 6 people living there!" – Joshua.

Regardless of such complaints, the provision of accommodation for the majority of first years by the University allows them to occupy their own individual, independent space during termtime. (Approximately 3% of the full-time, UK resident

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[8] This Hall has long had its critics – a 1979 letter to The Courier stated that 'The whole atmosphere is...unfriendly and unreal...Within a few days of arriving the various cliques have formed and they are almost impossible to break into. Walking round the place at mealtimes it is easy to spot groups of two to twelve occupying maybe 86 per cent of the inmates whilst the unfortunate outsiders stand morosely around looking on with a mixture of disgust or envy....It's all an isolated community of its own, totally unrelated to Newcastle and barely even to the University" (The Courier October 1979).

undergraduates responding to the survey were married or cohabiting and none had a child or children to care for, thus they tended to live in single rooms.) Although certain rules must be followed, undergraduates are no longer living in a parental or school governed environment; to a large extent, they can 'be themselves', and they must also take care of themselves. Doing laundry, preparing meals outside of those provided Monday to Friday, and, in effect, being wholly responsible for oneself and one's surroundings, are part of the process in which school leavers participate on attending University. Although practically and emotionally supported in some respects by staff and other students, 'going away' to University sees young adults renting individual accommodation, perhaps for the first time. This brings with it different responsibilities and behaviours. New aspects of this quasi-independence can include, for example, entertaining friends in one's own residence; deciding to stay in bed rather than go to a lecture; engaging in sexual relations in a private environment; or decorating one's surroundings to one's own taste. Students' individual identities have an opportunity to flourish, expand, or change in a new environment that is markedly different to the parental home, school or college.

Initially, and sometimes in the long term, occupying one's own private space amongst a building full of strangers can seem unusual and somewhat solitary. University rooms provide privacy, but they can also isolate students from their wider surroundings. It is important to note that socialising does not just provide entertainment value; it is also something that fulfils a social and emotional human need, and helps encourage the friendships which form the foundation of the undergraduate population. The extent to which one actively socialises depends on how one is experiencing student life. For the 10.3% of respondents who live with parents or relatives, or those first years who have either chosen to live in private accommodation (or had to as they were admitted to the University late through the 'clearing' process), the 'university experience' contrasts with that of undergraduates in University accommodation. As becomes clear in the next section, the majority of friendships are formed amongst those students one lives with, as opposed to the people met on the University campus, in lectures and seminars.

### 6.2.5 Faculties and Departments

The people that one studies with do not usually form one's main social base at the University of Newcastle – they are in the main peripheral acquaintances:

"A lot of the people off my course, we don't go out together of an evening – we might spend all day with them, and then in the evening we go out with someone different. We do have social things for the course but, normally, I don't hang around with these people outside of that in the day" – Alex.

"It's not that I don't get on with them. There's only a couple of people I dislike or whatever. But the other ones, I don't know, I just can't be bothered. You just haven't got time for people sometimes" – Chris.

Words used to describe the types of relationships with course colleagues include 'relatively well', 'I wouldn't say it's my friendship base', 'not proper friends', 'daytime friendships', 'I don't really socialise with them', and 'intermediate friends'. The relatively recent custom of forming cliques within University accommodation during one's first year is probably the main reason for this, although a perceived lack of suitable provision for getting to know other people within and between departments is also mentioned by undergraduates. Hallmates and housemates thus tend to provide the main friendship groups and social base for students.

Other relationships can and do form within the academic departments on campus. This varies depending on the department with which one is associated. Some courses are more vocational, thus bringing their members together on an every day basis; other courses mainly revolve around lectures given to hundreds of students, and others focus more on small group seminars. Some departments have well-run social societies and/or welcoming events, and their common rooms are used as a place to gather. Others are not perceived as having any social value, with students complaining about the way staff dismiss undergraduates and their needs.

Medicine, Dentistry and Agriculture are the most social departments, and it is surely no accident that these are the longest established faculties with the strongest social identities, known colloquially as 'Medics', 'Dentists' and 'Agrics'. Students studying for degrees in these areas spend more time with their coursemates, because of their vocational classes. For Medics and Dentists in particular, the location of classes in the Royal Victoria Infirmary and neighbouring Dental School, which contains a refectory, means that these students rarely need to venture onto the main campus. In addition, the meetings of 'MedSoc' and 'DentSoc' on Friday nights ensure that students on these courses bond together; students pay a one-off fee to join these societies, which

regularly provide entertainment and free alcohol. It is also worth noting that these degree courses are similar to intensive professional '9 to 5' working days, and it can be difficult for other students to comprehend the commitments of Medics and Dentists:

> "There were 10 girls on my corridor section, and 8 of them were Medics. And they were all from really dotted, different places around the UK. And we all got on really well. But I think the fact that they were Medics, and I didn't have anything for quite a few weeks really, and they instantly were head first...cos at the beginning I think it's the going out which is the, that's when you really start to get to know people, and that's what Fresher's Week is about, really. And the first 3 weeks. It's all like, introducing you to this person and this person; it's not really the academic life... And they were like – I'd love to, but I've got 4 essays in for Monday. So therefore you're, you found that you didn't see them as much, and they had 9 to 5 every day, whereas I had, I think last year, 7 hours a week, so it was a massive difference, as in, just when you're there. There was one girl, Shannon, who's a Medic, and literally we just didn't see each other for about 4 weeks because she'd knock on my door [and] I wasn't there; I'd knock on her door, she wasn't. We'd miss each other because we just had different lifestyles" – Francesca.

Several Medics and Dentists do have close friends or housemates outside their department, but they are the exception, and have usually made an extra effort to widen their social sphere. The hours worked do not really encourage allegiance to the midweek student lifestyle detailed below. Instead, socialising patterns tends to echo that of professionals, with low-key nights during the week and special events taking place at weekends. This does not necessarily mean that their working life is completely structured, however:

> "Monday to Thursday we go to hospitals, and then on Fridays we have just a full day of lectures, and then it can depend on what rotation you're doing, you might be in surgery, you might be in clinics, you might just be having seminars in the hospital" – Jude.

Those enrolled for Agriculture degrees, despite their reputation as a clique of drunken males, achieve more of a social balance between friendship groups. There are about 40 or 50 people in each year of Agriculture Studies, and they socialise both as a big group

and as smaller individual ones. The 'Agrics' do take part in many of their own social activities, including pub crawls, days out to agricultural shows and Thursday night in the Union (which involves drinking 'games' encouraging large amounts of alcohol consumption). Tom, a member of the 'Agric Society', defends the stereotyped culture:

> "It's got a harsh...reputation within the university for being big drinkers, 'lairy' [socially unacceptable] sort of people. Which isn't true really at all. It has been in the past, and there are one or two occasions that that has been known...I mean, we got banned from [a] bar in *The Bassment* cos there was too much noise...the main night we got together was Agrics' Night on Thursday...and if you missed that...it was good because you could spend time with your Hallmates."

Despite a strong Agric identity, these occasional activities can easily be assimilated into a social life which is mainly based around one's Hallmates or housemates. What the Agric Society does offer, however, is an opportunity for students to engage in socialising with all students within their department, rather than with first years only. This is true also of MedSoc and DentSoc, particularly as these students complete 5 year courses and it is thus important that they make friends who will accompany them throughout their course duration.

Other departments do host welcoming events of the cheese and wine evening variety for Freshers, but largely leave students to their own social devices. This makes it more difficult for friendships to emerge from degree courses. An Economics Committee was recently established by students to provide departmental social events; the Geographers, like the Agrics, hold an annual Ball. Students of all ages and stages belong to other social societies within the Union – some of which are affiliated to academic departments - but these do not have such a strong identity. Undergraduates tend to be given responsibility to organise their own social base within departments, which remains largely undeveloped, as most students already have a social base in Halls.

The structure of one's degree can also be of import in meeting others. Combined Studies students, for instance, do have their own meeting area, but by definition they combine parts of their degree course, and these take place in diverse areas – for example Psychology lectures in the Medical School, Classics in the Humanities

building, and Sociology in the Department in Claremont Tower[9]. Francesca, enrolled on a Combined Studies programme, said:

> "You don't really feel that you can get stuck into one thing properly because you're all over the place, in different Departments for this, and a different Department for that."

Similarly, Joshua, a joint honours student in his second year of study, said that he did not know anyone on the Geography part of his course, although he did sometimes have lunch with friends from his Maths lectures. Kirsty, who studied linguistics, did not know anyone from her lectures and seminar groups apart from a girl she had met in a Japanese language class. Some courses (such as the sciences and English) have large lectures, where it is easy to remain anonymous and not befriend anyone on your degree. Imogen, studying Biological Sciences, said that:

> "Last year we had a lot of lectures that there'd be 200 people or something, for most of our lectures, so it's not really that close."

The provision of small seminars as a teaching method does allow students on the same course to bond, but such groups can quickly break into cliques, which can be difficult to become involved in (particularly for local, overseas or mature students). As such, although students do have friends from their degree course or department, the majority of these tend to have been made through also living in the same Halls. Without this mutual connection, students are not likely to form full friendships with their coursemates – they remain colleagues or acquaintances. This can mean that they frequently lunch together in the Union, have coffee or a drink in a pub after lectures – but these relationships tend to be 'daytime' relationships, with students spending time with Hallmates and housemates outside of these hours. It is possible to make close friends through one's course, but this usually only occurs for those in departments with a strong social identity, and for a minority of other students. For those undergraduates who do not have a Halls relationship, and whose main means of becoming integrated into university social life is through the department, the implications of this situation may be far-reaching. As the data above shows, student life is different for every

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[9] Combined Studies can be taken as either a BA or a BSc and is drawn from subjects including politics, history, English, music, a language, social policy, psychology, and sciences.

department, and possibly every student. Yet core student behaviours exist and persist, typified in part by the habit of living and socialising with one's close friends formed in University accommodation.

### 6.2.6 'Living Out'

Following the first year of study, students usually spend subsequent years 'living out' in shared private accommodation elsewhere in the city; according to the survey, 87.5% of non-first year students rent this type of accommodation. In contrast to the earlier practice of 'finding lodgings' (i.e. a single room rented out, usually from a landlady), it is the norm for contemporary students to form groups of friends to live together in a shared house or flat, in a certain area for a certain price, let from a housing agency or private owner.

> "We basically all started Uni together. Us 4 lads lived on the same floor in Halls. Julie lived 2 floors above, Ruth lived 1 floor above. That's where it all stems from" – Jack.

The group that lives out together may be sized between 2 and 10 persons (although it usually contains around 4 or 5), and be gender specific or gender mixed. City properties cater for a variety of group sizes and desires, with agencies issuing housing lists during spring, for students to rent from the subsequent autumn (and possibly the preceding summer months, if stipulated by the landlord or requested by students).

Sharing a house with one's friends is generally seen as more desirable than living in Halls, because there is a private kitchen and usually a communal private socialising area such as a lounge. Having or renting a TV and VCR enables students to socialise together informally, without having to go elsewhere. Eating and drinking together in the house is also a popular pastime:

> "Going out is much less, everyone's much more money conscious this year, and also just – cos you've got the comfort of a house, a kitchen, watch EastEnders – whereas last year you couldn't do that...But now, we can go for a week and half just popping round and watching a video at someone's house. Really much more laidback" – Francesca.

Most of the students at Newcastle spend the majority of their time with their housemates, getting to know them better than any other friends at University.

Household relationships consolidate, and friendships with other friends from Halls, one's department, a sports team or society, tend to be less important. Responding to the survey, 85.7% of students said they often socialised with the students with whom they lived, whereas just 28.9% of students said they often socialised with friends from a society or sports team. This figure is similar throughout all the years of study, demonstrating the emphasis on both socialising with friends in the same Hall during first year, and friends in one's shared house during subsequent years.

Moving away from home to live independently is part of a learning curve experienced by most young adults, with important skills including budgeting and compromise:

> "When we go shopping I buy the food, and the bills, we got a ridiculous gas bill over there, £169 for the first month, which I think we're gonna have to get sorted out, so they're coming to read it. And then, in a house, just buying, at the beginning, especially, just buying fabric softener, washing up liquid, Ajax cleaner, which I'd never had to buy before, that's another money thing. We're probably spending less money because Halls, we weren't given lunch, so every day I'd go and buy lunch. Whereas now, we've got bread, and we can just make a sandwich. Going out has gone down. But everything has counterbalanced it a bit, spending on things from the house which I'd never done before" – Francesca.

> "It was all about being independent I think really, a lot of, a lot about sort of, stepping out and renting a place and learning about how to live for yourself, yeah, paying for bills, yeah. Certainly sort of gets you, gets you into gear" – Michael.

Socialising with housemates can become intense, and sometimes relationships break down. It is always possible that not every household will bond as a unit, and it sometimes happens that a member of the house becomes friendlier with those in another household, and spends time socialising with its members instead. In addition, not everyone has the opportunity to live with a close circle of friends. Dividing up who lives with whom can be a difficult matter for large groups of friends; some students advertise for housemates. Although it is usual to move out with friends made from Halls, it is also possible for students on the same course to decide to live together –

particularly in the case of Medics and Dentists, who know they will be together at the University in many years to follow after other friends have graduated.

Deciding *where* one lives can be important – different city areas have different 'scenes', and vary in price, as well as distance from the University. In some cases it depends on who else will be living in the area. It is common for student residents to know other students in a neighbourhood, but not to know any of its other residents. Jesmond, described extensively below, is now the most desirable (if not affordable) area of student residence, but other areas of the city such as Heaton, Sandyford, Gosforth, High Heaton and Fenham, as well as the city centre, are also possible areas to live. These are all reasonably close to the University and accessible by Metro or bus routes. These areas of the city tend to consist of large terraced houses, often converted into student rooms or flats, arranged in blocks of streets generally containing corner shops, newsagents, takeaways and other amenities (these are visible in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below). This can provide ready-made communities for students.

> "I so rarely leave the little block I live on! I live on *Tenth Avenue*, my boyfriend lives virtually back to back with us on *Melbourne Terrace*, and you've got *Balmoral Wines* and *Brian's Corner Shop* which sell most things you need, and just round the corner the other way you've got the *Chilli* [The Chillingham Arms pub], so you only leave Heaton to come to University!" – Amy.

Although most students rent directly from a landlord or the University, in some cases their parents take out a mortgage on a property or act as guarantor to their offspring who take out a mortgage. This can also affect the choice of area in which students will live, as buying property in some areas of the city can be more expensive than others.

Students in past decades have been viewed by the general public as being lazy in terms of house hygiene and cooking proper meals. Although most contemporary students at Newcastle University probably do not vacuum on a weekly basis, they do seem to take care in respect of their place of residence, both in terms of the quality of residence they choose, and the maintenance of their living conditions. Undergraduates can enjoy making their homes pleasant places to live, suitable for both studying in and entertaining others. Students also use their bedrooms, and sometimes communal rooms, to do academic work when away from the University (55.3% of the sample own a personal or laptop computer). Student consumption today includes at least some

amount of stylistic decoration and display in the environment where undergraduates live.

A new social opportunity that living out presents is that of the 'house party'. Transferring friendship groups to a private house not only facilitates house socialising on the level of quiet nights in together, but also enables others to visit the household, often in an entertainment capacity (Figure 6.3 below shows communal areas in two student houses). This can include group activities that include eating together, drinking alcohol, watching a video, smoking marijuana or hosting a big Saturday night party. The latter instance is a common feature of second year socialising, and although it can often result in structural damage and/or complaints from neighbours, is an important student occurrence in the lives of many, involving the consumption of alcohol and sometimes other drugs, music, perhaps food or a dressing-up theme, and lots of guests.

The area of Fenham has traditionally been associated with house parties involving students subscribing to 'alternative' fashion, and listening to 'alternative' forms of music, behaviours popular with the student majority until recent years. Although some aspects of 'alternative' student 'scenes' remain in areas such as Fenham and Heaton and Gosforth and Sandyford are also pleasant places to live, Jesmond is the area that is representative of changes in the student population in recent years. Jesmond is a predominantly residential suburb of quality housing in close proximity to the University. Rent in Jesmond is more expensive than elsewhere, but in spite of (or perhaps because of) this, the area is increasingly popular with undergraduate students who desire the surroundings, the housing, the facilities, and the proximity to the University that Jesmond offers. It is also popular because other people that they know live there:

> "The reason we went for Jesmond was essentially proximity really…it was the most obvious place…And we could all afford it - last year it was a lot cheaper than this year, so it was alright financially. I think, because you do have, you know other people are going to be there" – Jodie.

The following pages contain photographic illustration of Jesmond and Heaton, two of the residential areas described, and two communal rooms within privately rented student houses:


Figure 6.1: Areas Of Student Residence – Heaton.


Figure 6.2: Areas Of Student Residence – Jesmond.


Figure 6.3: Communal Areas In Two Student Houses.

The association between Jesmond and students is not merely because of the increase in numbers of students living there, but also because of their behaviours. In recent years, hotel bars on Jesmond's main street Osbourne Road have become popular with students who prefer the cosmopolitan surroundings to student pubs. The continental atmosphere is enhanced by pavement tables on terraces, cafes, restaurants, delicatessens and boutiques. Living in Jesmond is less about being the 'scruffy' student of yore, than resembling a stylish young professional.

Jesmond has always been an area where Newcastle students have rented accommodation, but until recently the University's students were more likely to rent in Fenham and Heaton. In these areas rented housing is cheaper,[10] and crime rates are higher, but historically students have been happy to live in them in part due to their thriving 'alternative' student scenes revolving around the Red Herring café on Brighton Grove in Fenham, and the Chillingham Arms pub in Heaton. Nowadays, however, the majority of students conform to more mainstream behaviours and attitudes, and an increasing number live or desire to live in Jesmond. As student tastes have changed, the availability of superior housing and a ready-made café-bar culture has transformed Jesmond into a popular student area. Students living in Jesmond, and outside of it, describe the properties rented to students there as 'nice', 'big', 'posh', 'pretty', 'superior' and other things they see as desirable. (The word 'nice' is often used by students to describe the things that have not usually been associated with them, such as 'nice' food, 'nice' bars and 'nice' housing – in other words, it is a euphemism for 'high quality'.)

The café-bar scene also hosts 'happy hours', when students can drink cheaply and excessively, but which take place in different venues than other areas. Students who live outside Jesmond also find the bar culture alluring, and may socialise there on occasion. It enables people to dine out in lovely surroundings, have a quiet drink with a couple of friends, or indulge in cheap offers. *Brewsters* is viewed by students as closest

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[10]Students tend to pay between £40 and £50 per week for a room in a Jesmond house, whereas in other areas they are likely to pay between £30 and £40 per week (excluding bills).

to a local pub; *Osbornes* and *Billabong* are popular bars; *Cafe Belize* and *Blanc* are somewhat quieter venues away from the main road.

As well as containing desirable properties and bars, another reason that students choose to live in Jesmond is because that is where their friends are living – James said, "We didn't want to live in Heaton or Fenham because we knew more people living here." Living a maximum of 5 minutes walk from members of one's social circle means that there is no real need to become involved in the local Jesmond community (if indeed such a thing exists). One student compared where she lived to *Ramsay Street* from the Australian soap opera *Neighbours*, because most of her friends rented houses within the same few Jesmond streets. Such proximity comes in particularly useful when working on seminar projects:

> "I'm lucky because all of the people in the group I'm in all live in Jesmond, and all live very close to each other so it is fairly easy to say we'll meet at someone's house at this time, and everyone can be there within a 10 minute walk" – Francesca.

Jesmond caters for and helps maintain the image of today's Newcastle University students. Its position as an increasingly popular 'student village' helps illustrate the changing consumption lifestyle of undergraduates today, which is further discussed in section 6.2.10. In contrast to the dressed down students of the 1980s, immortalised in the Tyne Tees documentary 'Redbrick' (1996), contemporary students seem to be aspiring to a higher standard of living.

### 6.2.7 'Going Out'

The city of Newcastle has the reputation of being an entertainment-focused city, with a large number of pubs, bars, restaurants and nightclubs ('clubs'[11]), as well as several theatres and cinemas. Combined with the Student Unions of Newcastle and Northumbria Universities, there are plenty of opportunities for student socialising. Whilst a reasonable proportion of students belong to sports clubs and other social societies, there are certain types of socialising outlined below that can also be identified as part of the contemporary student experience. These involve mainly mid-

[11] Students (amongst others) refer to nightclubs simply as 'clubs'.

week, late night social events such as [night]clubbing, and the related consumption of alcohol, available cheaply on club nights. There are more opportunities to 'go out' than ever before (students have a wider choice of club nights, cinema screens, restaurants and so on), and comparison with the historical data suggests that undergraduates today are taking more advantage of these opportunities than students in the past.

When speaking to students one will often hear the phrase 'going out'. Although also used generically, in most instances this refers to a certain kind of social entertainment that today's student enjoy – 'going out [night]clubbing'. Clubs in Newcastle usually open from 10pm until 2am, and provide a range of alcoholic and soft drinks, musical entertainment and at least one 'dance floor'. The increasing proliferation of weeknight club events taking place in the city of Newcastle since the 1980s now means that the most popular form of socialising for students is to go to clubs during the week to hear musical recordings played over sound systems by DJs:

> "We went out to the *Union* every Friday night, and we'd usually go clubbing on a Monday, and sometimes on a Wednesday, but we never went out at the weekends" - Kirsty.

Alcohol consumption in general, and overindulgent or 'binge' drinking in particular, is associated with going out to clubs during the week. Students may consume alcohol at home or in a pub or bar prior to going out, to 'get in the mood' and save money on their drinks bill; they are likely to consume alcohol when they go out to entertainment venues. Some may prefer to consume soft drinks. Despite the stigma attached to young people who don't drink/get drunk in the student domain, the key aspect of contemporary student life to note here is that of staying up socialising into the early hours on weeknights, with or without the aid of alcohol or other drugs (see section 6.2.10 below).

The increasing emergence of clubs and club nights, many of which are dedicated to students, seemingly provides a wide choice for students. Local club listings used to contain perhaps a couple of events per week; now there is a choice of roughly 10 venues per week night, as well as the club events hosted by the Student Unions. This allows Newcastle University students to explore different venues on different nights, although many have created their own routine. On Monday nights the *Tuxedo Princess* (sometimes *Tuxedo Royale)* serves cheap drinks to students before 11pm and is a

popular venue, particularly amongst first years. Commonly referred to as *The Boat,* this is a nightclub on a boat moored on the River Tyne that features a revolving dance floor. *Baja Beach Club ('Bajas*[12]') and *Sea*, on the city's recently developed Quayside, are also popular Monday night student haunts. On Tuesdays, *Legends* (19)70's night is well-liked; Wednesday is again popular at *Bajas* and *Sea*, and also *Ikon* (formerly *Ritzy*), particularly if there is a *Vodbull* occurring (this is an event night focusing around the consumption of a favourite student beverage, vodka mixed with *Red Bull* energy drink). Thursday tends to be a less popular night, although *Legends* is generally favoured, or *Foundation* for those who like independent ('indie') music. Mondays and Wednesdays remain the biggest student nights out. For students visiting the gay scene, week nights are also the most popular, again featuring various student offers. Although not all students go clubbing on a regular basis, it is a recognised part of undergraduate socialising and entertainment. For some students it can provide an underlying structure to their life, providing routine in their fluctuating lives:

> "Last year, we'd just go every Monday we'd go to *The Boat*, every Wednesday we'd go to *Bahas*, every Friday we'd go to the *Union* and every Sunday we'd go to the *Vodka Bar*" – Lucie.

Students comment that the cheapness of alcohol at these club nights is the primary reason for attending – as Francesca says, "It's just student nights, just the cheapness of everything, to get a better deal." The clubs mentioned tend to cater for a mainstream crowd, playing chart, popular and dance music. Other venues such as *Foundation* (formerly *Riverside*), *World Headquarters* or *Rockshots* also cater to students with alternative musical tastes, but are not as popular as they once were. The type of music played can often come second to the general clubbing experience, with low entry free and discounted drinks. Alex, an Engineering student in his second year, stated:

> "*Bahas* or *Legends*...I'd go there but it's not really the sort of music I like...Tuesday at *Legends* is 70s night, I have been known to go there on the odd occasion. Wednesday at *Bahas* is a really cheesy music night."

In actuality, the Newcastle clubs frequented by students provide largely similar experiences that include drinking, music, dancing and romantic/sexual encounters.

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[12] With the 'j' pronounced more like 'h', as per the Spanish language.

Participated in by the majority of students, these clubs offer cheap or free entry and target the student market. Student discounts and the value of the student pound were not widely recognised or exploited until the 1980s by cinemas, restaurants or clubs, but are now extremely popular, and advertised by the plethora of flyers distributed to passers-by on campus. Club nights hosted by DJs playing records rather than live acts have increased in popularity over the last couple of decades amongst young people *per se*, in part due to the increasing popularity of 'dance' music in the UK music scene. Yet the primacy of going clubbing over any other form of entertainment, to participate in what is largely a mainstream experience and that takes place during the week not at weekends, is specific to the contemporary student population.

It is expected that, particularly in the first year, students go out to a club and get drunk on cheap drink offers on a regular basis. Over time, preference for *The Boat* and *Ikon* may shift to clubs such as *Sea*:

> "Monday nights used to be *The Boat*, but now we go to *Sea*, cos *The Boat*'s just full of Freshers. And that was like, perfect last year, cos everybody was a fresher, you knew loads of people, and everyone was there to get purely, absolutely hammered. And I went one week and I was like – oh my God! I know nobody! Whereas we were used to just walking around and stopping every few paces to say hi to someone. So we go to *Sea* instead now" – Lucie.

Alternatively, particularly for students who have completed one or two years of study, going out can later mean going to bars with a late licence, rather than club events. As well as preferred clubs, there are also certain pubs and bars preferred by students. Rather than going on a big night out clubbing, students may opt instead for a few drinks at a pub, bar or in the Student Union. Pubs and bars around the Haymarket, Jesmond and Quayside areas are popular with students; those in the Bigg Market area, frequented by locals, tend to be avoided. Again, not all students choose the same places - they are decided upon by cost, quality, location and personal preference – but they provide a largely homogeneous experience. Older students comment that over time they have stopped going to places that host happy hours and cheap drink offers, opting instead for more salubrious surroundings, plenty of seating, and alcohol that tastes 'nice'. Popular haunts of this ilk include Quayside and Jesmond bars, and others such as *The Lounge* near Central (train) Station, and *Pacific*, in the Haymarket area. (One student also identified a similar transition from the regular consumption of Class A

drugs such as LSD, amphetamines and Ecstasy during the early years of study, to cannabis smoking only during later years, and abstinence – "finishing partying" - in pre-examination periods.)

As the University and most student accommodation is situated within walking distance of these city venues, it is unsurprising that contemporary students take advantage of some of what the city has to offer. Coupled with independence and renting their own residences, moving to a lively city centre location offers distractions of a nature that may not be found in the student's home area. Abigail's home, for example, was 'in the middle of nowhere':

> "A beautiful little village at the edge of the Yorkshire moors, and then school was about 6 miles away, so Newcastle was a nice change. It's gorgeous, and beautiful, and pretty, but you wouldn't want to live there when you're 22, without a car."

Student socialising and local socialising only intersect on occasion, due, in part, to the intensive midweek nature of student socialising, as compared to the weekend socialising of locals. Students are much less likely to go out at weekends. Friday nights at a non-mainstream club or the Student Union may be attended, and are generally popular, especially for first years:

> "Say down the *Union* on a Friday night, everyone tends to go down there, so...most of the undergraduates tend to go down there…Say in a month, if you went every Friday, you've got a chance of meeting everyone you know down there, but you're not guaranteed to see everybody" – Alex.

Other social outings include going out for meals, particularly to celebrate a birthday; going to a Casino, cinema or bowling alley; or staying in (see the next section). Important aspects of socialising for students also include having lunch, coffee or shopping together. Going to the pub to watch sports on satellite TV or compete in a 'pub quiz' is also a popular activity. Sometimes students venture out of their immediate environment to the coast or countryside, although this is rare. Students may also take part in team sports and/or gym classes, or regularly participate in their own individual workout routines at the Fitness Centre:

> "I'm very into going to the gym. I do that every so often, a good few times a week. Things like Boxercise class, I do that, me and my friend got into that in the second year" – Abigail.

The amount of socialising carried out by students varies. As section 6.2.16 below on study shows, socialising is only a part of life at Newcastle University. Yet students have many choices available, and tend to live quite social lives, due to substantial amounts of leisure time and access to disposable income (see below). Scheduling these forms of socialising in between studying or working can often be complicated, but for undergraduates, social relationships are an imperative part of life at University.

### 6.2.8 'Staying In'

Students frequently go out to socialise, but they do not spend all their time and money on external entertainment. Particularly when living out in the second and third year, staying in by oneself or with a group of friends is a common event during the week and particularly at weekends, when city events are less student-oriented and more expensive. Indeed, much of the drive to go out to socialise during one's first year at the University can be connected to not having a private lounge or living room in Halls in which to comfortably spend time alone, or with one's friends. Staying in to read, to play games on a console or PC, individually or communally, to watch TV to eat, drink and talk with friends or watch videos, are common student practices.

The practice of staying-in is most common at weekends, when students take time out from both a week of university work and external social events. As James stated, "Weekends are pretty non-event – recovering." Staying at the weekend can also be cheaper – Raf said that "Weekends, I don't normally go out cos it's too expensive, so we might get a video out and watch a video here or something." Samantha agreed:

> "We've found we don't really go into town on Saturday nights because it is quite expensive compared to...obviously, if you're used to student nights, and cheaper drinks, and cheap club entrance, then Saturday does seem expensive. So normally we'd like, have a meal in, get a takeaway, and go to the cinema or something."

Friday nights can involve going to a club or the Union, but Saturdays for those in Halls and houses are more likely to entail sharing a mutual cooked meal or takeaway, watching television, or attending a low key event such as the cinema or bowling:

> "If it's sort of a special occasion we'd maybe go to a restaurant on the Quayside somewhere, La Tasca or somewhere, is quite a favourite with people, to do something like that, but, other than that, Saturday nights are sort of, Blind Date and sit in front of the TV with a bottle of wine, I should think" – Isobel.

Going into town at the weekends is much more a local practice, involving those who live and work in the city seeking relaxation and entertainment after a week at work. Weekends are also low-key for students due to this being a suitable time for them to travel back to visit family, friends or a partner in a home area, or at other universities in the UK (92.7% of students said they socialised during term-time with people who did not go to Newcastle University and lived outside of the region). If students have a part-time job, this may also involve weekend work.

During the week, it is common for students to eat meals together, both in Halls and houses. When living out, students can invite friends round to participate in shared meals and the group consumption of alcohol, or tea and coffee. Most student households have a television, and video or digital/cable/satellite TV, to provide background entertainment in a communal social space. Particularly when living in a close-knit student community such as Jesmond, socialising together with friends in one's local area is an easy option. For students who enjoy taking recreational drugs in the company of others, the home can also be a preferred, safe place to do this.

Although it is possible to be a student and not take part in household life, it remains a key feature of contemporary student life. Again, local students are likely to miss out on this area of the contemporary student experience, particularly if they are living with their parents. For the vast majority of undergraduates, however, living out with friends is an important basis during their time at University.

### 6.2.9 'Hanging Around'

Another important aspect of student life is that of 'hanging around' - before, after and in between other events. Particularly on campus, the wait before or between lectures, the route between buildings, the sitting down for lunch and coffee and the meeting of

friends are key parts of student life. Undergraduates and their friends have different lectures and seminars scheduled, between which they are free to entertain themselves. This time can be filled by having coffee, lunch or a snack, going to the gym or shopping, alone or with another person or people; but it is also spent waiting or moving between places, providing some 'spare' time, but not enough to return to one's home and do something there. Thus, students can often be found 'hanging around' in or outside the Union or the library, or underneath the University Arches (part of the original Redbrick University, at the entrance to the old quadrangle); they have time 'in between' structured events that has the possibility of being filled in various ways.

Lectures normally start on or just after the hour, and around this time undergraduates constitute a mass exodus within and between buildings, moving on to lectures, going to meet other people, or finding a space where it is acceptable to sit and be by oneself. If students require refreshment or other goods, they can visit vending machines or Union outlets; the refectories provide plenty of spaces for sitting, and doing nothing much, without actually having to buy anything to eat or drink. Student life is full of these gaps. Much of undergraduate life is conducted during interim time, travelling to the campus, amongst it and from it, deciding what to do in the spare fifty minutes before the next lecture, where, how and who with. Students are not constantly busy with study whilst on campus – they have time during their day which is not scheduled, and which they may just take to sit and think, to buy a newspaper, or to have a cigarette, or to walk across campus to the library to return a book. Sometimes, due to the cancellation of a lecture or finishing one's reading sooner than expected, there is more of this interim time.

During the working day, being on campus and being in one's place of residence are two very separated experiences. Undergraduates may not all participate in a 9 to 5 day on campus, but if they are travelling into University it is usual to spend a few hours there, before returning home towards late afternoon or evening. As the campus is located on the edge of the city's main shopping area, students can fill their spare time here; they may also use the time between lectures for studying in the library or visiting the gym:

> "I've got a gym thing on Monday morning before my 10 o'clock lecture I like to go. And then I'll probably go there after lectures in the day, kind of thing. At

lunchtime - before, or at 11 or if I finish at 11 I'll go then and get it over with kind of thing" – Abigail.

As such a substantial part of their life is spent in transit, i.e. travelling to and from campus, between different areas on campus, and between the campus and the city centre.

### 6.2.10 Student Finance and Attitudes to Money

Following the abolition of grants during the 1990s, undergraduate income now generally consists of a parental allowance, student loans, earnings from a part-time job, or a combination of these.[13] This money covers living expenses including rent, although it is not unusual for parents to pay a student's rent on their behalf. Money allocated by the Student Loans Company is means-tested, but all students are still entitled to some form of 'top-up' student loan, and interest-free overdrafts of up to £2000 are nowadays not only an accepted, but an *expected* part of student finance. This situation has created a scale of income, ranging from those who have tuition fees paid by the government and rely on their student loan allocation to support their rent and living expenses, to those who have everything paid for by parents and are also entitled to a student loan allocation and interest-free overdraft. According to the survey data, the average monthly income for students (after rent) is £210.58, or £52.64 per week.[14]

Undergraduate income is thus higher than the £42.70 income support per week received by unemployed 18-24 year olds. It is built, however, on the practice of taking loans and overdrafts for granted. Those students with generous parental allowances may be able to pursue a fairly high standard of living, but they are setting a standard that other students find difficult to follow without accruing hundreds or thousands of pounds worth of debt. The provision of a large debt facility can encourage students to live beyond their means, as with Lucie:

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[13] The University also runs a termly hardship fund for students in extraneous circumstances. One of the students interviewed, Jude, also had income from shares he had bought.

[14] This includes available funds from loans and overdrafts, sources of income rarely available to the unemployed.

> "I'd rather go out, and although I do need to earn some money, I'd rather be, like, in loads of debt and have a really good time and stuff, than be worrying."

Reliance on a well-paid job after graduation can also encourage students to live beyond their means.

> "I've sort of, part of my, well not my philosophy, but, my thoughts on debt, or the debt that I'm in, is that I'm doing Dentistry, and at the end of the day I'm pretty much, touch wood, guaranteed a job when it comes to next June/July, that there is a job out there for me and it's well paid, the starting salary I think is £20,000, which is a heck of a lot of money; and probably my sister, who's 7 years older, has been working for 7 or 8 years, and she's only just on £20,000, that I'm thinking I can – I'd rather have a bit more money now, and maybe live not quite as extravagantly when I qualify, and sort of spread out the money a bit more and get into debt and pay that back when I have got the money, so I think that's sort of my idea behind it all – I'll just go and buy this or buy that!" – Isobel.

Adjusting one's lifestyle to that of one's friends and colleagues can easily happen at university due to the provision of free or interest-free credit. Taking part in the socialising and consumption activities associated with being a student today can be a pressurised and expensive process. Perhaps unable to fully realise the implications of graduating with, for example, £10,000 of debt, many of today's students have as high a standard of living as they feasibly can. They rent quality accommodation, spend money they do not have on stylish items such as clothing, engage in regular socialising, travel abroad - and experience intermittent financial problems. It can be argued that the experience of debt, overspending and occasional lean financial periods provides an important learning curve, but it is a learning curve which rises steeply year after year, with more credit available to an inexperienced, and sometimes irresponsible, sector of UK society.

Although not every student exhibits the same consumption behaviours, the majority are concerned with participating in the same lifestyle as their peers, even if they cannot afford it. In the case of some individuals, the potential complications caused by expenditure whilst at University have caused parents to take charge of their offspring's finances. Kirsty's Dad, a bank manager, feeds money into her account whenever it runs

low; his surveillance ensures her spending is reasonable. Lucie's Mum banked her student loan on her behalf, and transfers monthly amounts into Lucie's bank account. Tom's Dad caretakes Tom's money, recording transactions in a cash book, reading all of his son's bank statements, and keeping an eye on his overdraft limit. Such methods may succeed in keeping students from incurring excessive debts, but, simultaneously, may potentially defeat the object of encouraging young adults to be responsible for their own financial situations.

Although most individuals accepted debt as part of student life, a minority of students have difficulty coming to terms with it. Several students also mentioned the fact that they were frustrated with being in debt and were looking forward, following graduation, to ending their intensive leisure lifestyle, and worrying about money. Amy, for example, received the full student loan,[15] which paid for her rent and other expenses. As she did not have much left over after this she used an interest-free overdraft "but I tend not to like to use my overdraft where possible, because it's – this whole thing about spending someone else's money and being in debt."

High levels of consumption may also be not as straightforward as they seem. On the one hand, many students seem to take for granted the possibility of going clubbing, buying designer clothes, and so on. On the other hand, they are astute at spotting bargains – attending student nights where entry and alcohol is cheap, and buying things in sales and on discount. Similarly, not all students have problems budgeting– some keep well within their means. Abigail, for example, was due to be in credit by the time she graduated, despite a hectic social life and running a car. She had taken a gap year and worked in a hotel throughout its duration, saving the money and working part-time throughout her Business and Management degree (for which she obtained first-class honours):

> "I've got one account, [a] Post Office account, that I put some money from my year off in, that I just haven't touched. I've got £2000 in that. But that's hopefully going to be my travelling money. I've still got credit in my other bank account cos I basically, my income for a long time's just equalled my

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[15] During the academic year 2001-2, £1,365 in the final year and £1,870 in all other years for undergraduates 'living away from their parents' home and studying' (Student Loans Company 2001).

> expenditure. And it's only now that I'm starting to cut into my savings a bit with working less. I've always been able to balance it alright."

(It is worth noting, however, that Abigail was one of the last recipients of a Local Education Authority grant throughout the duration of her degree, which may have affected her solvency.)

The practice of going out, as described above, can be a large source of expense for students:

> "30 quid, something like that if I go out. Never more than 30 quid. I think I've only spent more than that once. If I go into town it'll be twice a week so 60 quid a week" – Raf.

Lucie went out clubbing on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, saying that "if I am going out then I won't buy food for a week or something, just survive on what I've got." Patterns of socialising at the University encourage students to go out, in stylish clothes, to venues where they usually consume alcohol (and/or other drugs). Entry to clubs and live music events can mount up, despite student discounts. Spending money on a taxi back from events is also now common practice - there is little thought of getting the last bus or Metro, or deciding not to go out. Students also have a wide choice of restaurants, cinemas and theatres to attend, both inside out and outside of regular working hours:

> "We go for lunch – quite frequently we've been going out, taking time out to go for nice lunches down the Quayside or somewhere like that, or in Osbornes – they do great meals in there for cheap prices...Meals at Hotbox Cafe, something like that" – Tom.

Some excursions, such as to one of the city's two Casinos, revolve around doubly expensive entertainment, such as alcohol consumption and gambling - for one student this resulted in a loss of £280 on one night. Expenditure on alcohol can be extensive, despite the existence of cheap student offers:

> "When I socialise and go out, the same with my friend, we're not like the skimping student kind of thing. We like to go to nice bars and drink, I tend to drink drinks that I like rather than what's 20p kind of thing, so I probably spend too much on that" – Abigail.

> "[I] just get carried away. Big nights on alcohol. And then if you're going to go to a house party you have to take alcohol with you, you've got to take a bottle of vodka or whatever you want to take along. I guess a lot of money does go on alcohol, definitely" – Phillippa.

Staying in also costs money, however. Renting cable/digital/satellite TV and/or video equipment and video cassettes; ordering out for takeaway; drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes or consuming cannabis; throwing house parties that can cause damage; cooking suppers for friends; buying a games console and games and renting games; buying CDs – these things do not correspond to being on a budget.

Decorating or furnishing a room, with items ranging from posters to cushions, is seen to be a legitimate expense in making one's often basic surrounding more attractive. Subscribing to some sort of style or fashion in terms of clothing and cosmetics can also be expensive, particularly if consuming mainstream High Street or designer goods as an increasing number of Newcastle University students do. Contemporary undergraduates, compared to those presented in Chapter 4, can be well-groomed and well-dressed, even when 'hanging around' on campus. (It remains uncommon however for women to wear 'full' makeup during the day, choosing either light or no makeup.)

As well as spending money on going out (and staying in), today's students have other expenses. It is no longer unusual for students at the University to run a car during term-time. Useful for travelling between a home area and University, buying, insuring, taxing and fuelling a car may nevertheless still be seen as a luxury even for non-students. Admittedly, parents help out with finances and the cars themselves need not be that expensive, but this nevertheless demonstrates the consumption patterns of some undergraduates. In extreme cases, students are given expensive cars by wealthy parents, such as the brand new MG and Volkswagen Golf which were raced around the car park at Henderson Hall by their owners, in Leo's first year at the University. Running a car is not an essential part of being a student, but it is becoming a more common feature.

As well as car ownership, expenditure on high quality food occurs for some students, with a reliance on pre-packaged supermarket meals rather than cheaper food, for example from the market. It is not unusual for students to buy high-quality food ready prepared from the large Marks and Spencer store in Northumberland Street, located

near the University. It is common for communal dinners or suppers to occur amongst friends, featuring high quality ingredients and bottles of wine. Even if they have little money, students are comfortable spending it on good food rather than keeping a very basic diet that they can afford, as with Jodie, who is in her final year of study:

> "I'm frivolous with strange things, I think. I'm quite stringent on things like clothes, but then I quite like to have....food-wise, I've got quite expensive tastes. I like to drink nice bottles of wine, and I like to invite friends round. So in that sense I probably spend a lot more than average on food."

Although it is sometimes be funded by wages from a job, it is quite usual for undergraduates to take at least one holiday per year. Something that is regarded by some non-students as a luxury, is something many students take for granted. Chris's parents, for example, did not have a large income so he, in the third year of his degree, mainly survived on a student loan. Nevertheless, he was planning a holiday to Portugal using his interest-free overdraft, as well as going on a University field trip and a sponsored excursion to Africa. Lucie and her Hallmates bonded further on a summer holiday:

> "There was a group of us in halls, who were like really good mates and we went on holiday with each other during the summer...we call ourselves the West Side, and we went down to Cornwall for a week and had these rugby shirts printed up with 'Westside' on the back of them, and everybody's names, and Cornwall 2000."

Some students have difficulty in identifying how their income is actually spent:

> "At the moment I think I get about £70/75 a week or the equivalent of, so I'm probably spending say £100 a week, which, I couldn't really tell you where it went either, because I don't really go out very much!... I've had exams, the last sort of month of so, and I thought to myself, oh, well I'm not going out I'm not spending money so I'm gonna buy nice food, I'm gonna go to Tesco and buy what I want, not what's cheap or what's on offer....and so I'd maybe go to Tesco a couple of times a week and buy sort of nicer food or... whatever...erm [laughs]) it's making me think where this money goes! Erm...probably sort of things like maybe getting takeaways at the weekend, or going and buying a bottle of wine from the local shop, and if you're having to spend – use your

> Switch card and you have to spend over £5 so you buy something else and, I fritter it away completely, I think....it sounds terrible, a hundred pounds a week and I don't have much to show for it at all"– Isobel.

There are a number of students who do not subscribe to the majority lifestyle of thrice-weekly clubbing, and so on. These students may opt for t-shirt and jeans 'fashion', and venture out for the occasional pint; they might live on pasta dinners, and perceive going out to a restaurant as extravagant. There tends to be a huge discrepancy, however, between these undergraduates and their peers. Alex, for instance, spent little money socialising apart from occasionally seeing live bands or going to the pub. He had a full student loan and some money given to him by his grandparents, but was still worried about being in debt. Not being able to spend as much money as friends and colleagues can cause problems. Jessica, from a state school background, worked in her local pub in the holidays, received £150 per month allowance from her father, and paid for her rent from her student loans. She lived with two girls from Marlborough independent school who did not have jobs, and who received £250 to 300 per month allowance from their parents, who also paid their rent. This was part of a larger set of problems within the household:

> "They're all richer than me, which does cause arguments....just fighting about who's paying for what. I didn't go out much in the first year because I didn't have any money, and they didn't seem to understand that."

Other exceptions to an increased standard of living are local students who live with family. Often opting out of going away to study because of the financial implications it brings, the local students interviewed were staying rent-free with their parents, and being supported by them, and their own wages from part-time jobs. This was sufficient for their existing needs, but it would have been difficult for them to behave as the majority of students did due to issues of finance and transport.

It remains that the position of Newcastle University students with regard to money is currently an important and unique one at this time in their lives. Many are, for the first time, spending semi-permanent periods of time away from home, and experiencing, if not total financial independence, at least control of their own spending. It is easy for commentators to say that one doesn't have to behave the same as everyone else at university, but students face intensive pressure to behave in certain ways, from their

peers, and from companies targeting the 'student market'. Coupled with the availability of loans, overdrafts and possibly wages from a job, there is the potential to attain a high standard of living, even if this means sliding into further debt. Having a large overdraft is not merely common; it is expected. Faced with a wide range of consumption choices, it is perhaps unsurprising that students overstretch themselves, often in an effort to match the lifestyles of others. As Tom said, "I shouldn't really be spending. We come back here to have a few beers and I'm like – oh, God, what am I doing?"

Unused to budgeting, responsible for paying necessary bills yet tempted with an array of luxuries and needing respite from the challenges of academic study, it seems likely that many students will experience financial problems. Receiving large amounts of money via loans, parental contribution or overdrafts can give students the illusion of wealth:

> "I've got my loan to live on, so that's pretty much...they don't space it out well enough. They like give it you in three equal bits, your first term, then halfway through your second term, the third bit they give you £8-900 and there's like 4 weeks left of term, you've got £900 right in the middle of exam time. I've got all this money, it's like a disaster waiting to happen" – Joshua.

### 6.2.11 'Class'

"I am a Rah (or so they say)
and also known as Bint
My hair is messy, quite a state
and of the blondish tint
My daddy's quite obscenely rich
Now that's of use to me
Cos living like a Rah my friend
is a costly thing, you see
My mobile phone is always on
to take those vital calls
'specially when they're coming from
within the same four walls.
The Global is my daily haunt

Baguette, perhaps some broth
but if you've got my sofa pal
you'll have to face the wrath!
The guys all line up at my door
They just don't do cheap shags
I'll say the Queen of Newcastle
I'm riches me, not rags!"

(Anonymous letter to The Courier newspaper, 2000.)

The popular discourse at Newcastle University not only perpetuates ideas regarding student behaviour, but has, since the 1980s established informal class divisions amongst its undergraduate students. The UK Prime Minister Tony Blair may aspire to a 'classless society', but within the realm of higher education, there is a gap perpetuated between independently educated and state school educated students.

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne has a high intake of students from an independent school background, with 34% of undergraduates educated at public or private schools as opposed to the state schools that educate the majority of UK teenagers (Carvel 1999). Correspondingly, only 17% of Newcastle University students are from the skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled classes (UCAS 2002). Across all UK universities, students from social classes I, II and II are much more likely to apply to university than those from social classes IV and V (Carvel 1999).

Class is such an issue in popular student discourse at the University that it merits further exploration. Although not always viewed as a problem, there are often large gaps between the lifestyles of students from different backgrounds as described above. A mainstream consumer lifestyle may be the one to which most students subscribe, but sustaining it is dependent on the ability to finance it. Cultural differences between students from different backgrounds are also are visible, and affect the type of experience students have at the University.

Independent school students usually become part of an existing network of similar students from the same House[16] or school. One can also become part of a network of

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[16] A 'House' at an independent school is both a physical place where one resides, and a group of which one and a selection of one's fellow pupils and teaching staff are members. Houses compete against each

students who know each other through the same preparatory school, a gap year, family friends or even the public school rugby 'circuit'. Over the years, Newcastle University has become increasingly popular for pupils from a variety of independent schools. Existing networks provide a ready-made social infrastructure for Freshers, without them needing to make much of an effort. Acquaintances from the year above at school, or who were met on a gap year, and who already attend the University, can be a valuable commodity in terms of introduction to the student lifestyle. They serve to welcome new students, and to perpetuate and extend a network of students from similar educational backgrounds. This 'meet and greet' philosophy is then extended by pupils who, although they do not know each other *per se*, have enough common frames of reference to get to know one another without making too much effort:

> "There is a big network within the public schools...you'll be introduced to someone, and you're chatting, and it's not really 'Where did you go to school?' but 'Where are you from? Which school? Oh, do you know that person?'" – Francesca.

> "I knew 10 or 15 people who came here, which made it easy to me. If you find you fitted in there, then you could be their mates" – Tom.

James, who himself attended a popular independent school and was part of the public school infrastructure at the University, nevertheless saw a contrast between himself and others:

> "A lot of the big public schools, like Eton and Harrow, there are a large number of people from those schools up here. And...in the first year especially, they all hang together. I know, a lot of my friends are from Harrow, and they're all so isolated, and they don't know anyone else. And that's one of the reasons why it becomes such a divide, it's because they all got on with each other, and they can't really be arsed."

Thus, cliques of students within Halls and the Universities are perpetuated over time. Although class background need not be an obstacle to friendships, the rapid formation of independent school cliques can make other students feel instantly excluded from

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other academically and in sporting events, with individual and group achievements measured by the award of 'house points'.

trying to make friends with those from other backgrounds. This is not to say that students from different backgrounds do not mix; but in the majority of cases, students from similar backgrounds seem to be thrown together, and stay together. Although students from state school may also have contacts when they arrive at the University, networking does not operate on such a large scale. Whether it is the ready-made groups of independent school students, their increasing presence, or the contrast between the formation of friendship groups are formed that is dependent on background, there exists a class stigma at the university. Nicknames such as 'Sloane' and 'Rah' are employed derogatively (if often in jest), as a verbal protest against certain behaviours associated with these types of students. Although the origin of these terms can be contested, 'Sloane' seems first to have been applied to early twentieth century upper-class English girls who did not need to work for a living, and its association with persons of both genders from wealthy, educated backgrounds has perpetuated with the dictionary definition of a Sloane or Sloane Ranger:

> "a young person, typically upper- or upper-middle-class and female, favouring expensively casual clothing suggestive of rural pursuits, speaking in distinctively clipped tones, evincing certain predictable enthusiasm and prejudices and resident (during the week) in the Sloane Square area of London or a comparable part" (Chambers Maxi Paperback Dictionary 1992: 1025).

'Rah', taken as part of the vocabulary of these persons and is typically used to express positive emotions such as excitement, encouragement or agreement, as a short version of 'hurrah'; this usage has been ridiculed and it has subsequently been adopted as a noun.

Throughout the history of The Courier (student newspaper), 'Agrics' from land-owning families were viewed negatively in terms of their wealth and behaviours. Over time, this negatively has extended to any student who can be identified as a 'Sloane'. Definitions are similar to that cited above, although residence has been extended to anywhere within the South of England and various university campuses attended by such students. Markers included being from independent school and/or a wealthy background, owning a brand new car, speaking with a class-associated or 'plummy' accent, and dressing quite smartly. For men, the clothes this type of person generally wears are 'Chino' trousers, loafers and a smart shirt, perhaps with a pullover. For women, the picture is slightly more complex, as rather than wearing pearls and

pashminas, the image of a female Sloane covers a whole selection of public and private school fashion which is visible throughout the High Street, such as flared jeans, beads, bleached blonde hair, tan, bandanna or baseball cap, Marlboro light cigarettes, coloured scarf and a mobile phone. This is illustrative of the way that anyone subscribing to such fashion and speaking with a southern accent can be categorized as a Sloane, as can anyone who did not attend a state school. Perceived behavioural markers are rather more limited – but include 'looking down' on people who did not attend independent school, and having little respect for the value of money or other people's privacy. Although cruelly ridiculed and mocked, these stereotyped people do exist, and become quickly recognisable to the anthropologist. The ways such students look and behave is frequently described in conversations with students, and ascribed negative connotations.

> "I think it's partly what they wear. Sort of trainers, cashmere-y things, all the girls tend to have blonde highlighted hair [laughs], all the same colour. They do talk really louder. You're like on the Metro or something and they're talking really loud, and it's like 'be a bit more like, everyone can hear you! It sounds really pretentious!" – Imogen.

> "That is a look, and there are a few people that actually do dress like that, you know, pink shirt, chinos and loafers" – James.

The mocking discourse is first visible in back issues of The Courier from the 1980s, when its left-wing editors either created or publicised it. Current students admit that they did not know what a 'Sloane' or 'Rah' was before coming to the University, but that other students, and reading The Courier, helped them identify what this type of student was. Jessica said:

> "I don't really understand it. I didn't know that they existed for a long time; I didn't know what they were talking about. I think being in Newcastle you do just get to identify the kind of person. And it's sad that any barriers of friendship would ever come up. But I wouldn't say that it would ever occur that I would be good friends with a Sloane."

Although extremely rich upper-class students do not set a particular standard for the student lifestyle, the prevalence of middle and upper class students throughout the university is noticeable and, as described in the previous section, has initiated a set of

consumption behaviours that persist throughout the university population. Upper-class students are also accused of creating divisions between the student and local communities due to their behaviours. These can range from racing one's new car, to getting disrespectfully drunk and damaging one's house or local amenities, to alienating non-students on a night out. As such, none of the individuals involved in the study self-identified as a Sloane, and many students, such as Leo, were swift to disassociate themselves from Sloanes:

> "I don't think I fit the criteria for a Sloane. So I don't think it's me...It's not that I don't amazingly want to be a Sloane, it's just that I'm not structured like a Sloane and I don't think like a Sloane. I don't act like one."

The 'gap year' is also associated with class. Although many students pay their own way to backpack around the world, and taking a gap year is not specific to background, it tends to be the expected thing for independent school students to be involved in before attending university. As well as rekindling friendships with those met on a gap year, merely talking about adventures on the typical backpackers' route through East Asia and Australasia can provide a frame of reference for conversation that excludes others who have not taken part in similar experiences. Taking some months out to work or travel independently can also contribute to differences between students – it may make some students more mature, or less keen to associate with those pupils attending university directly after sixth form.

In conclusion, it is imperative to mention that the notion of class exists very much as a stereotype throughout the university. There are students from wealthy backgrounds who have a variety of friends, work throughout the vacations and respect others regardless of class status; there are students from state school backgrounds who operate within a small circle of friends from school, and do not mix. It remains that richer students from public schools are targeted as 'Sloanes', and ridiculed for being part of the boarding school system and exhibiting certain behaviours associated with it. Not all students from this background conform to these behaviours. Finally, the behaviours associated with the majority of undergraduate students in the sample are not exclusive to those from an independent school background.

### 6.2.12 Gender and Ethnicity

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne largely regards gender as a non-issue, both in institutional terms and student life in general. Gender differences do not merit a mention in current University literature, and gender differences are rarely visible in the ethnographic data. For contemporary Newcastle students, university seems to be a particular time in their lives when men and women live as equally as possible, not always divided along gender lines, and largely valued on their own academic and personal merits. This contrasts with prior attitudes towards gender within the university system as charted in Chapter 4, and can be viewed as partly related to changes within UK society *per se.*

Although most University housing is divided on a gender basis, it is not unusual for students to live out in mixed housing during their subsequent years of study. Platonic male/female friendships are an ordinary part of student life, and stereotypes of gendered behaviour are less expected and observed in the university environment than in UK society as a whole. Intimate relationships with the opposite and/or same sex are also a part of student life, as described in the next section.

Despite the expansion of higher education in recent years within the university system in general, British undergraduates at the University of Newcastle remain ethnically homogeneous. 93.7% of survey respondents classified themselves as white. Students also identified as being of Indian (2.1%), Chinese (1.0%), Black Caribbean (0.4%), Black Other (0.1%), Pakistani (0.2%) or Another (2.5%) origin. The behaviours of contemporary students as identified by this research may have the potential to socially exclude those from a non-white background, but evidence for this was not found and the issue is not explored further within the thesis. Admissions statistics about ethnicity have only been available since 1990 (Connolly 1994), making comparison difficult, and although there is an existing debate as to whether ethnic minorities are adequately represented in the university sector as a whole (Modood and Shiner 1994), as with most research on university students this does not appear to contain the opinions of students themselves. Such an issue calls for a wider research remit than this thesis covers, but is an area of research which it is imperative to study, and it is regrettable that such an important issue cannot be addressed here.

### 6.2.13 Romantic Relationships

University is widely recognised as a place to make new friendships and meet romantic/sexual partners. These liaisons, and existing friendships, have the possibility of growing into something more lasting, such as co-habitation and marriage, but do not necessarily follow this pattern. In response to the survey, although only 3.2% of students cohabited, 26.9% had a relationship with someone else in Newcastle and 19.3% had a relationship with someone who lived elsewhere. These behaviours contrast sharply with those of fifty years ago, and as such can be viewed as part of a more general liberalisation of attitudes towards sexuality in England since the 1960s. Nevertheless, university can still be conceptualised as an arena for experimentation with one's sexuality, and/or the ability to conduct an intimate relationship in a new, independent, social world.

Whether due to the age of the participants involved, the pressure of distance or the ability to live closely together in the University context, student relationships are often serious and intense. Tom has been with his partner for just five months, but sees her every day and spends most nights with her at her house. At the weekends they take trips away together. He calls her the 'love of my life', and comments that "It's not as if we get under our feet all the time, we really enjoy our time together." Amy has been very good friends with her current partner since their time at university, and since forming a couple she has spent most of her time at his house, to the extent that her friends know to phone her there, rather than at her own house. Raf and his partner were involved in the Rag Parade together, are joint officers in the Student Union, and spent all their nights and lunchtimes together.

Less serious relationships, 'flings' and 'one night stands', also take place within the student milieu. The reliance on alcohol as a social component may contribute to the existence of short-term intimate liaisons that are situated within practices of 'sharking' or 'pulling' i.e. going out with the motive of becoming intimate with someone (not necessarily with anyone specific in mind). James formed a romantic relationship with a woman early on in his university career – this ended after three weeks. His friend Mark, who had been dating a woman since sixth form, broke up with her shortly after they both came to Newcastle University:

> "In the first year it's very difficult to keep a relationship you've had for 4 years cos everything is so different from before. You're meeting more people. And especially cos they were at the same school, they probably used to see each other all the time. That's why they split up when they came here. I think [he] just wanted a bit of freedom, and play the field a bit."

Another type of relationship related to university life is the 'long distance relationship'. These are primarily conducted by female students at the University of Newcastle. Although the distance over which such intimate relationships take place may not be particularly extensive, there may be problems with the ideological separation from one's partner, who is experiencing student life elsewhere, or may already be part of the professional world. Partners are likely to live in a home area, or be attending another university. Visits may be short and infrequent, but in an attempt to persist in continuing the relationship, a commitment is made. The long-distance relationship can often become the butt of jokes and/or a real pressure, particularly if combined with a possessive partner, or one who seems never to be there for her friends, but always on the phone to her boyfriend.

Although her partner was not far away at Durham University, Jessica's last serious relationship bore all the hallmarks of the stereotypical long-distance relationship. During her first year, instead of making lots of friends at the University and frequently socialising, as her peers were doing, Jessica revolved her whole world around her relationship – which, incidentally, ended acrimoniously. Kirsty writes letters to her current partner Charles every week-day, and sees him every weekend. She studies and has a job during the week, so that she can devote her time to him at the weekend. (Charles is her second long distance relationship with someone from her home area of York whilst at university; she has just ended one three year relationship to begin her new one.) Amy's last relationship was long distance, but she rarely saw her partner both inside and outside of term-time due to course and travel commitments:

> "He was in Cambridge, and I was up here. And it wasn't even like we saw each other much in the holidays because he does archaeology, and he just gets these fantastic opportunities which he takes, to go to – it's ridiculous, over the summer we both had 3 months off, and he went to Malta for a bit, or somewhere, then he went to Siberia for 5 weeks; he came back the day that I left to go to Thailand for 3 weeks on holiday. And then I came back and he was

> in Malta. I think we saw each other for a total of 3 weeks out of the 3 month holiday. I mean, that's a particularly bad example, but that's just what it was like. We were pretty good together but you can't maintain a relationship on that basis."

Phillippa has problems sustaining her relationship with a male student at the University of Bristol, now that she is in her final year of study:

> "It works out - I've been down this term, since January, I've been down there twice, two weekends, and he's been up here once, so it works out twice a month, about that. It used to be more. It's more work now, and I'm getting more and more broke as university life goes on. But yeah, it's cut down quite a lot cos of work, I think."

Travel for students at the University can also present its own obstacles, with individuals concerned with the railways in the UK, which were experiencing problems not only with delays and safety but also flooding, during the research period. Dedication and intensity in these circumstances is perhaps necessary; attempting to maintain an intimate relationship over time definitely has its problems. Isobel, a dental student, used to have a partner who occasionally drove up from Cheshire to see her in Newcastle, but would be exhausted after the drive. Both would feel obliged to make the most of their time together, but found it difficult to do this at prescribed times and eventually decided to split up largely because of this factor:

> "He always used to come up and see me, but it's a 4 hour drive and a 4 hours drive back again, and he was having to drive about 2 or 3 hours every day to work, Monday to Friday, that that was a lot, and he was tired when he got here, and I was – I don't know, we just didn't really have much in common, and I don't think it helped being so far apart because it was too big an emphasis on 'right this is our time together and we have to do something' – you know you've got to be in the mood for going out and doing whatever, and sometimes Saturday night you just want to sit in front of the telly, and if the other one doesn't then, you know, arguments, well not quite arguments, but...it just wasn't worth it, so..."

As becomes more apparent in Chapter 7, these types of undergraduate relationships rely to a great extent on communication. An intimate relationship whilst at university

has the potential both to extend one's independence, yet simultaneously restrict it. 'Getting off[17]' and having sex with fellow students is linked to the flexibility and spontaneity of student life. Yet spending too much time with a partner can alienate one from one's friendship group. Maintaining an 'adult' relationship during one's time at university can be difficult to reconcile with student behaviour, which usually revolves around groups as opposed to couples. Although relationships can in some cases replace friendship groups altogether, within the student population it seems necessary to maintain a balance between both.

### 6.2.14 Consumption of drink and illicit drugs

Group alcohol consumption is the main mode of socialising amongst students. Introduced by FYC as a tried and tested part of being a student, participating in 'pub crawls' or drinking to excess on club nights becomes, for most, an imperative part of student life. Although not everyone participates in these behaviours, they are recognised both within and without of the student community as something typically practised by them. (They are also practised to a similar degree by other young people, but with different forms, timings and meanings, as discussed further in Chapter 8.)

In the Newcastle University context, going to the pub for a drink or two is seen to be a harmless way of passing time, getting together, and socialising; not all alcohol consumption by students is excessive. The pub can provide a change of scenery, an opportunity to get out of the house and a way of 'cutting loose' after time spent studying or working. Although excessive drinking and partying can be unhealthy, communal alcohol consumption within the English student context also acts a relaxant and social 'icebreaker'. Particularly during the introductory weeks of a student's career, having a couple of drinks to help get to know other people in Halls or on one's course can be helpful socially. Overseas students comment that, for 'the English', a certain amount of alcohol is usually necessary to release social inhibitions.

Binge drinking practices in city venues are also popular with many students, however. Student offers within the Student Unions and at clubs and pubs in the city offer a wide

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[17] In the UK 'getting off with someone' is the equivalent of the American 'making out' i.e. kissing and other forms of affection, and does not involve having sexual intercourse.

variety of alcohol at discounted prices, such as 70p for a bottle of beer or £9.99 for 'all you can drink, all night'. It is also common practice to have a few (alcoholic) drinks before going out into the city (this is cheaper than buying drinks in licensed venues). For first years, drinking over and above recommended medical amounts can take place on a regular basis. During the course of their university careers students tend to move from cheap binge drinking to different forms of socialising with alcohol, such as house parties or upmarket bars. Binge drinking may decrease in frequency over time over time:

> "I do go out and get absolutely twatted [under the influence of drink/illicit drugs] quite often, but you feel you have a slight edge of control over it after years of drinking. rather than just getting your tits out for the lads and stuff like that!" – Amy.

Staying up late drinking at a club is something that continues to be perpetuated by students throughout their subsequent years of study, however, even if only on an occasional basis; on her big nights out, Mondays and Wednesday, Abigail said she was likely to "drink extortionate amounts down the Quayside and fall into some club!"

Regular and sometimes excessive alcohol consumption is not only accepted by most students as part of their life, but they also do not seem to be concerned about its consequences for health. Some juggle drunken nights out with gym workouts and intensive study periods. Life outside term-time can provide a period of recovery, of course, as Lucie suggests:

> "I don't get as hammered [very drunk] when I'm at home either because it doesn't go down that well! Well, I mean, my parents don't mind, but if I got as drunk at home as I did at Uni my parents'd just be absolutely disgraced."

Although a student 'drug culture' at Newcastle is not widely spoken of, consumption of banned substances is both visible and referred to amongst the student population:

> "I know a lot of people that do weed, and like at the events lots of people do E or speed, but not much harder drugs" – Stephen.

Group alcohol consumption remains the predominant form of socialising, but it is also alternated and/or accompanied by other drugs. Some students smoke cannabis, within the home and elsewhere, and/or take drugs such as Ecstasy and amphetamines

('speed') at club nights. Being away from the family home gives students the opportunity to make these substances a part of their life without being subject to parental disapproval or surveillance. Earlier research at the University of Newcastle found that excess alcohol consumption and the consumption of illicit drugs begins before university, with alcohol consumption increasing on beginning university, and illicit drug consumption changing little on university attendance (Newbury-Birch 2001: xiv). Nevertheless, the ability to consume these substances away from the parental home is strongly associated with being a student. The city centre location also contributes to this – as Shelley, a final year student, said, "Pills [Ecstasy tablets] are cheaper here, and easy to get hold of."

This does not mean that every student consumes alcohol or other drugs. Some students do socialise without them. Jude, who gave up drinking soon after beginning university, accompanied friends on nights out but consumed only soft drinks. For those who (and perhaps for religious reasons) do not take part in 'going out' and drinking, however, it is possible to be excluded from these dominant modes of student life. Until the 1990s, the common representation of such behaviours was of pints (or half pints) of bitter [beer] or cider, accompanied by the occasional 'spliff' (marijuana cigarette) - cheap forms of becoming slightly intoxicated. For the 18-24 year old undergraduate population studied, however, drinking alcohol regularly and/or to excess, and consuming other drugs, are recognised as behaviours associated with being a student which are frequently adopted.

Despite awareness that it is unhealthy, many students also smoke tobacco on a regular basis. As with the consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs, however, cigarette smoking is likely to fulfil a psychological role for students who may be under academic and social pressure. Getting together in a smoking area or having a cup of tea and a cigarette in the home can also be a part of student life. Smoking a certain brand of cigarettes or rolling tobacco can also be associated with image, with many smokers showing a disregard for budgeting by purchasing the most expensive – yet popular – cigarettes on sale. Groups of smokers clustered together outside buildings or the library are a common sight on campus.

### 6.2.15 Having a job

It is normal for some undergraduates at the University to work part-time during termtime and/or vacations during their degree course. Although students have access to student loans and interest-free credit, many still feel it is necessary or helpful to earn money whilst a student. (Although some students do experience severe financial problems others may simply have a job to earn money for a holiday or to keep busy.) It is possible that trying to work and study can cause problems with a degree, but the individuals in the contemporary population are aware of problems of balancing work and study and try to take them into consideration. Having a job in Newcastle may create a new circle of friends, but may mean one is less able to take part in student nights out. The types of jobs performed by students vary, but during termtime tend to include shop assistant, bar person, or employee of the Student Union. Other positions are advertised in the Union 'job shop'. Outside of termtime students may have a job in their home area that they return to during vacations, or find a temporary job – summer jobs are particularly popular.

### 6.2.16 Studying

The emphasis on socialising, working and consumption has so far omitted the reason for which students are officially admitted to the University: to study for a degree. Despite the many other attractions of student life, studying *is* regarded by undergraduates as important, whether they have a genuine love of learning, or are working towards a qualification to help them with their future career. Participating in lectures, seminars, coursework and examinations is a requisite part of being at university, even though it does not necessarily entail 'being a student' in the broader sense.

For students of Dentistry and Medicine, the degree course can be a full-time commitment, but not all students work such hours. Time spent on study and leisure is dependent on which degree course a student is registered. The more scientific and vocational degrees contain a larger number of taught sessions than arts and social science courses, that consist of a few core lectures, and allow students to pursue further study in their own time. On courses such as Agriculture, the first year is intensively teaching-based, and over time places more reliance on individual study. Other courses increase the number of lectures and seminars over their duration which, coupled with a

dissertation requirement and/or revision for examinations, can make the final year intensively work-based. It is common for students to do less work in the first year, and become more committed in subsequent years, at the same time toning down their socialising. It is rare that students are disciplined for missing lectures and seminars in most departments; as long as they make the required grades in coursework and examinations they are viewed to be fulfilling their role as an undergraduate in terms of institutional regulations.

As such some student attitudes towards study are casual. Government policy has attracted increased numbers of students into higher education throughout the 20th century, but a proportion of contemporary students view their degree course as an extra few years respite before entering the working world, rather than an essential part of their career development. Some students are not interested in the course they are doing, and instead are interested either in gaining a good qualification, or merely enjoying the student experience. For others a 'work hard, play hard' philosophy is espoused. For those young adults who cannot or will not self-discipline, their degree comes second to living life.

> "Today I did the first 1000 words of my dissertation...but I wouldn't really sit down and work, use my spare time wisely. Or efficiently. It's too tempting...At this final stage of your degree, you...should be thinking, 'I've got to settle down!'" – Tom.

The University's provision for self-reliant study demands that students organise their own time successfully – but for many this allows the bare minimum of academic study to be done. A substantial proportion of courses combine heavily populated lectures with fortnightly seminars, for which only a couple of chapters reading needs to be done. It is thus common for students to be able to work intermittently during termtime, and intensively for crucial deadlines such as coursework essays or examinations. The Newcastle experience contrasts with that of Oxford and Cambridge, which requires a steady stream of evidence of intensive study, in the form of regular essays or papers discussed at small tutorials. This can lead to Newcastle students resting on their laurels, focusing on socialising rather than studying until that all-important final year:

> "It'll be my third year next year and I'll have to do a dissertation, and all that, so, yeah, I'll have to work a lot harder. I found I didn't do a lot of work last

year, but I passed all my exams fine. This year I was thinking 'oh, I'm gonna do some more work', but I haven't got quite into the swing of that yet. I need to build myself up for my third year cos I know it's gonna be harder" – Samantha.

The difference in course structure can also place added pressure on students to participate in both studying and socialising practices – it can alienate them from each other. As an Engineering student, Alex's workload was fairly high in that he had 2 hours teaching on Monday, 4 on Tuesday, 4 on Wednesday, 7 on Thursday and between 3 and 6 on Friday. His flatmates, who were not doing what he considered 'proper' courses, always finished lectures at lunchtime and came home to watch television. Rebecca, a Medic, complained that her non-Medic hallmates always seemed to be at home or going out rather than studying, and that she could not really get to know them. Those individuals who do have less than ten hours teaching a week generally admit that they have an easy life, with large amounts of time potentially available for leisure practices. For example, a day on which he was interviewed for the research (half an hour late), Joshua stayed in bed until 11am, read a (non-curriculum) book until 2pm, went to Buddhist meditation, and then arrived at the University.

The lack of structure and control for many degree courses enables students to study less intensively. This is not to say that students are necessarily lazy. A proportion of them is, and will do the minimum amount of studying needed to gain their degree. Others are highly productive. Jodie is not enjoying her engineering course, but nevertheless spends a nine to five day in the department, and then works at home in the evenings and on Saturdays. Abigail studies hard, works hard and plays hard in a very self-disciplined way. Not all students find it easy to retain self-discipline when their lives lack structure and routine, however, particularly when there are many social events occurring. Despite the importance of study, socialising remains a crucial part of student life. However hard undergraduates study, it remains that many of them are relied upon to structure much of their own working days, which can be largely flexible:

"I don't work from 9 to 5 or anything like that. I'll work periodically. If I've got more than an hour between lectures I'll normally go to the library for a bit. Sometimes, if I've only got an hour I'll still go and do a little bit, but that requires a lot of willpower to not go to the café at all. Otherwise, I've been tending to come in for whenever my first lecture is, which is usually round

about 10 or 11 o'clock, and then any time during the day when I've not got lectures I'll go to the library up until 5 o'clock, and then come home, sometimes get straight back to work, and then have my dinner, have a bit of a break, and go back to work for a bit. Or – I don't know, it really varies. yesterday I came home at about 4.30 and didn't do anything until 8pm, and then did a couple of hours work and then went round to see [my boyfriend]. But other days I'll have got home at that time and done 4 or 5 hours work rather than 2. It really does vary loads" – Amy.

"I think the student lifestyle, it's not very regular is it? Lectures at different times, different days. You never quite sure where they're gonna be, so...there is the unknown about it" - Leo.

This can be a particular problem for students from a boarding school background:

"You don't have any responsibilities here, so, well you do, but it's not forced upon you. You don't have a bell every morning to wake you up for breakfast, or teachers telling you to get to lectures or lessons, you don't have to do sport – you do end up sort of doing nothing. It depends on the person, but I ended up doing not very much" – James.

Jack, who is taking a year out to work in industry, views a definite contrast between the life of a student and that of a working professional – he doesn't get to organise his own time, and has little daily flexibility:

"It's the long working hours that do it. Because usually the stuff I'd fit in during the day, I have to fit in in an evening. And I eat very late in the evening and things like that. It is quite different, especially the getting up early."

### 6.2.17 University/Home

As Chapter 4 demonstrates, in England it is has long been common practice for students to study at a non-local university. Living away from the parental home, in a new physical and social environment, has been associated with student life throughout most of the 20th century. Recent changes in government funding policies have, however, apparently led to an increased number of traditional-entry students attending their local institution in recent years, and often residing in the parental home:

"It just felt natural. Didn't want to get into lots of debts" – Stephen.

Finance is not the only reason students stay at home to study – students may not want to move away from their family or a partner, as Michelle found:

> "Well I wanted to stay at home, to be honest. I just wanted to stay here...I just like being at home really, I suppose, and I had a boyfriend I've been going out with for quite a while, I suppose, I just prefer to stay at home – I like it up here."

Despite being the same age and nationality as their peers and enrolled on full-time courses, these students are experiencing a different student lifestyle to those who live away from home. At the University of Newcastle these 'home' or 'local' students form a minority, but studying them helps emphasise the differing behaviours between them and the 'away from home' undergraduates.

Moving away to university, even to a city fairly nearby, usually effects the creation of a 'dual' lifestyle, with students practising new behaviours and participating in a lifestyle that differs to that they previously knew:

> "Up here I've got a different house, I've got a different family, so to speak. I've got friends that they wouldn't have met unless they'd come up here...Different responsibilities, different independence, different worries. I mean, there's very few things that are common. I haven't got...I don't know, there's just not really the...I don't think you can compare how I live up here to how I live at home" – Jodie.

The duality or contrast between this and 'home' life is often emphasised by the students who adapt these behaviours. New undergraduates become part of new social groups, perform different daily tasks and live lives different to those of sixth-form students and other young adults. These differ sharply from the types of behaviours exhibited when residing in the parental home, including different ways of socialising. Yet at the same time students remain a part of their home environment. This can even become confusing in a language sense. When returning to their residences from campus, for example, students speak of going 'home'. But they are also recognised as, and themselves recognise, having another 'home' outside of the University context. These two 'homes' sometimes need to be distinguished from one another, with the

parental home often identified as '*home* home', i.e. one's real home, as opposed to one's temporary residence whilst at University.

Refusing or being unable to conform to 'going away' to university can merit exclusion from certain aspects of student life. Michelle, studying psychology, borrows her Mum's car to travel to and from the University, and although she had made friends with two women on the same degree course, rarely spends time socialising with them in the evening. Stephen, a first year student, lives in Chester-Le-Street, which entails a long bus journey back to his parents' home and makes spontaneous socialising with people at the University difficult:

> "It's a bit far from the town [Newcastle], it's a bit difficult going in everyday on the bus, but it's alright...I've got friends there, but we just tend to meet up there, don't tend to go out after – it's difficult getting taxis backwards and forwards."

Although local students register for a degree, this does not mean that they have become students in the same way as the majority of undergraduates. In theory, being enrolled at the university by taking part in official registration and induction sessions, and attending lectures and seminars, allows one to occupy the role of undergraduate at the University of Newcastle. In practice, however, participation in FYC and other social behaviours that are enhanced by living in one's own accommodation in the city (such as staying out partying until the early hours before getting a taxi home) are parts of the broader experience of being a student in which local students rarely participate.

For undergraduates at Newcastle University, being a student is also about learning to live away from home with new people, and experiencing new modes of residing, studying and socialising. Living with peers in university accommodation is an important part of becoming part of a wider student group. Local students instead generally have an existing friendship base, just as non-local students have in their home areas. This group socialises at the weekends, and does not engage in the new social patterns of university students. Local students do occasionally mix with coursemates - for example, having an early evening drink or going to the cinema – but they are not part of the intensive social groups that arise from living *in situ*. Living at home can be a financial advantage, particularly if students live rent-free with parents. It

is likely, however, that they will remain apart from the mainstream 'student experience.'

Although living away from home, it is important to note that connections to family and friends in a home area remain important for non-local students. Many of them are simultaneously returning to a family lifestyle during the vacations (and sometimes at weekends).

> "I've been back home every holiday so far. I've never stayed in Newcastle like, longer than any of my friends have, because when everybody goes home it just gets really depressing, you're like 'oh, there's nobody here now, nobody to go out with' [disappointed] so, I just go home, and plus, I can earn some money when I'm back there as well" – Lucie.

> "I'm not one of these people who stays up in Newcastle; I get bored in one place. I go home when it's holidays, and I probably pop home once a term – I'll be going home in the next 3 or 4 weeks" – Jack.

Students also sometimes visit their friends in a home area or, if their friends have also left home to go to a university, travel to visit them there, to spend time in their new environment:

> "My two best friends from home, one of them's at Nottingham [University] and the other's at Sheffield [University], so me and the Nottingham one are going to Sheffield to meet up, just cos it's sort of not so far for me to travel as going all the way back home. It's easier than them both coming up here!" - Samantha

Occasionally returning to the parental home at weekends to spend time with family, and/or take time out from the involved student experience, is fairly usual during termtime, and families can take this seriously:

> "Whenever we go home, say if we go home for the weekend or something, we'll go out for a meal, and me and my sister try to arrange it so that we go home on the same weekends so we can see each other as well, cos she's in Nottingham...doing Medicine" – Lucie.

As Chapters 7 and 8 further demonstrate, the linkage between the University and home is paramount to the lives of contemporary students, as they are fully ensconced in neither, suspended between both.

## 6.3 Conclusion

Although, as Woodrow and Sims (1994: 44) state, "there is no such thing as a typical student experience", it is apparent that a dominant model of student life exists at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. There are various possible ways of 'being a student' that engender meaning outside of lectures, laboratories and libraries. In the main, however, a majority of students – a *core* - conform to similar types of behaviours. Although students differ from each other in vast and important ways, they tend to manifest these core behaviours.

Ethnographic data regarding student lives, as presented above, suggests that student life is less dictated by the rules and regulations of an institution, than by the ways students live together as a group and groups, enacting and re-enacting social behaviours. These informally regulated practises, mediated by other groups of people (i.e. other students and city entertainment vendors), have helped create a way of student life practised by the majority of undergraduates. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, this aspect of student life has existed throughout history, although the behaviours associated it them have been subject to change. Undergraduates at Newcastle University can and do exhibit differences dependant on a variety of factors – where one comes from, one's educational background, whether one had a gap year, one's ethnicity, one's spiritual and political beliefs, one's musical taste and so on. Their university experience is linked to where they live in first year, who they make friends with, what department they are in, how much they study, where they live during second and third year and with whom, whether they have a job or not, whether they are in a relationship or not, whether they are into drink or drugs, this band or that band, going to the gym or not, how much money they have to spend, and, finally, who they are as a person. Yet still, combined with all these things, the population of 18 to 24 year old undergraduates at the University of Newcastle exhibit the core set of behaviours identified above.

In this chapter it has been demonstrated that life amongst the contemporary, full-time, traditional-entry undergraduate population is in part about studying for a qualification, but also revolves around the enactment of practices including living away from home in university accommodation (and subsequently 'living out' in private accommodation); frequent and extensive socialising; the purchase of certain styles of clothing and consumables such as food, alcohol and recreational drugs; perhaps gaining part-time employment; and regulating one's own behaviour and becoming independent. This thesis argues that the nature of contemporary student life, and the adoption of these behaviours, are paramount in understanding the importance of mobile phones to the population studied, as is presented in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 interprets the lives of undergraduates and their relation to mobile phone use in more depth.

# Chapter 7: Undergraduate Students and Mobile Phones

*I think it's when you come to University, definitely. You just find that everybody has a mobile phone, and that's just the way you keep in touch with people* – Michelle.

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on modes of communication amongst the University of Newcastle upon Tyne undergraduate population studied, with an emphasis on mobile phones. Information regarding student usage of wired telephony, email and letter writing precedes an overview of the adoption rates, usage patterns and meanings of mobile telephony associated with this population. Data is presented in the form of statistical quantitative data and selected qualitative data from various sources, as specified extensively in Chapter 3.

Mobile phone communication is explored below, both in general, and in terms of variables in student lives, including gender, income and year of study. The chapter attempts to illustrate all key aspects of mobile ownership, use and attitudes explored by the study, to provide a comprehensive portrait of the role of mobiles amongst full-time, traditional-entry undergraduate students at Newcastle University. These aspects are discussed in summary, but are not related to other chapters within the thesis at this time. They are explored more extensively in Chapter 8, in conjunction with the behaviours associated with contemporary student life (as presented in Chapter 6), and existing research into young people, and into mobile phones (as presented in Chapter 2). It is the belief of the thesis that this context is paramount in gaining a more informed understanding of the use and meaning of mobile phones in student lives, and thus the data presented below, divorced from their ethnographic context, are considered incomplete at this stage.

The chapter consists of five main sections – (1) general communications data; (2) mobile phone ownership and purchase data; (3) mobile phone usage data; (4) attitudinal data; and (5) data summary.

## 7.2 How Students Communicate by Email, Letter and Phone

Non-present communication is imperative within the contemporary undergraduate population as a whole. Telephony, letters and email are important as both substitutes for, and additions to, face-to face communication. Keeping in touch with friends and family in another environment, making calls to University colleagues on campus and off campus, and being able to contact employers and University staff if necessary, are behaviours that benefit from the existence of effective communication systems not relying on the co-presence of another person or persons.

Figure 7.1 shows the non-present communication methods used by the Newcastle University sample to contact the people in their lives:

| Method: | Email | Phone | Email & phone | Letter | Phone & Letter | Email, phone & letter |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Society/sports team** | 31.5% | 30.2% | 36.7% | 0.3% | 1.0% | 0.3% |
| **People at work** | 14.2% | 59.7% | 17.5% | 2.9% | 1.6% | 0.4% |
| **Housemates (students)** | 16.7% | 44.3% | 35.6% | 0.0% | 1.1% | 0.1% |
| **Other Newcastle Uni students** | 16.3% | 22.4% | 58.6% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 0.0% |
| **Housemates (non-students)** | 8.2% | 59.1% | 22.7% | 1.1% | 2.5% | 0.3% |
| **Immediate family** | 2.2% | 33.1% | 32.0% | 0.0% | 8.7% | 23.8% |
| **Extended family** | 8.0% | 32.6% | 7.8% | 21.3% | 18.2% | 9.0% |
| **Other local friends** | 6.8% | 64.0% | 24.1% | 0.7% | 1.5% | 2.6% |
| **Other non-local friends** | 8.7% | 12.2% | 31.4% | 1.8% | 4.1% | 39.6% |

Figure 7.1: How Students Communicate With People In Their Different Social Groups – Frequencies.

Figure 7.1 contains a wealth of information regarding the different modes of communication undergraduates use when contacting different groups (regardless of whether or not they own a mobile phone). It shows that whether students use email, phone, letters or a combination of these modes, is highly dependent on who they are communicating with. For communicating with a society or sports team, students are most likely to use email (31.5%) or phone (30.2%), or a combination of both (36.7%). They are much more likely to contact workmates on the phone (59.7%), although email is also a method used (14.2% email, 17.5% email and phone). Student housemates are most likely to be contacted by phone (44.3%), and also by email (35.6% email and phone, 16.7% by email); non-students housemates are much more likely to be contacted by phone (59. 1%, 22.7% email and phone). Other Newcastle student friends are most likely to be contacted by a combination of email and phone (58.6%).

In respect to family, the picture changes even more. 33.1% of students contact immediate family by phone, 32.6% by a combination of phone and email, 23.8% contact family by a combination of letter, phone and email, and 8.7% by phone and email. Extended family members are most likely to be contacted by phone (32.6%) or letter (21.3%).

An overwhelming 64% of students contact non-student friends who live locally by phone, and also by email (email and phone 24.1%, email 6.8%). For friends who do not live within the University area, the picture shifts again. Students are most likely to communicate with them using a combination of email, phone and letter (39.6%), which emphasises the importance of letter-writing in this context, and also email and phone (31.4%).

The complexity of this data suggests that students are combining a variety of communication methods, depending on which is the most applicable in a certain circumstance. Whilst Newcastle undergraduates use email for personal communication, for example, their parents are less likely to and thus phoning and letter writing remains popular in this category. Previous generations seem to remain more used to communicating socially by letter rather than phone, or at least using it as a complementary method.

> "[Mum] does every now and again. It depends – I mean, if she sends me a parcel [of other mail] up, she'll write a letter or postcard" – James.

Letters, in particular, tend to be reserved for communication over distance, suggesting that although an 'old-fashioned' method, it retains a specific use. Qualitative data shows that extended family members, such as grandparents, help perpetuate the popularity of written communication. Letters can take on extra significance if it is known that loved ones, such as family or a partner, enjoy receiving them. The time and effort involved in writing them, as compared to making a phone call, or sending an email, can make them more appreciated. They can thus be a complementary form of communication for young people:

> "I write to my boyfriend every day. And I write to my Mum and I also write to my grandparents. And to the girl at Liverpool, and to Anna at home. I write a lot of letters... I like doing it. And I like receiving them as well" – Kirsty.

Letters are important in external communication, but within the University context, more immediate forms of communication are preferred. Email is perceived as cheap, convenient and rapid, and is thus a popular method of being in contact. It is used for study purposes, information generation and chat and gossip between students:

> "A lot lately I've been [using it] for researching my postgraduate course. I've used emailing; it's been great to get information sent out when you can't get hold of them on the phone. Then, I do use email people at Uni to keep up; we often use it to pass work on, files that we've got to copy for each other, and get loads of messages from the secretary; email lecturers; things like that" – Abigail.

It is also used in the wider context; for example to parents who have email accounts, and particularly to friends at other universities or overseas.

> "There's one or two [friends] that live near me in Manchester that I'll go and see when I'm back for holidays, but just mostly through email" – Jude.

Despite the substantial number of Newcastle undergraduates who have computer access in their place of residence, no more than half of these operate an email account from a home computer. This seems to be due to them not having access to a wired phone line, or, if so, a concern with dominating it; and the provision of free email on easily accessible University computers, which 99.4% of all students use for email and internet access. For many students, using email can be a routine part of a day on campus:

> "I'd get in for about 9.40 [am], then go and check my email. Then go to the lecture, then…I'd have [my] lunch, then practicals" – Stephen.
>
> "Normally go in, have a cup of coffee and a fag. Then do some work, go check my emails, go back and do some work, go and have a fag, go and do some work" – Amy.

Overall, however, telephony is clearly the most popular form of communication. Communicating with family and friends from home in this fashion remains particularly important, both in providing social support and chat, and as part of a routine:

> "It's nice having a conversation with someone from home…I've got friends up here, but it's still nice to keep in touch with people from home that you've known for a while." – Isobel.
>
> "I probably speak to my parents every other day. Well, sometimes I'll go for like a week or something and not speak to them, and then when I speak to them they're like 'Oh, how are you? You still on the face of the planet then are you?' And then some weeks I'll like speak to them every other day. And my sister – I don't speak to my sister that much, but every time I do we're all just like 'nannanannanann' [i.e. talking rapidly] – you can't get a word in edgeways." – Lucie.

The frequency and duration of phone calls to a home location varies, but tends to be regular, and between 5 to 30 minutes. Tom speaks to his parents twice a week for about 20 minutes. He also regularly talks to friends at other universities for about 10 to 15 minutes each time. Alex talks on the phone to his friends in other areas for 30 to 40 minutes, and rings his parents once a week for about 15 minutes. Jodie speaks to her parents every few days, and rings her Mum on Sundays, speaking for between 2 and 25 minutes each time. She also likes to ring her brother once a week, and rings old friends from school once or twice a term. Isobel talks to her Dad more than her Mum, as they are both football fanatics. Joshua, who only phones his family on birthdays, spends up to an hour and a half chatting with friends outside the University, most of which he speaks to on a daily basis. Jessica talks to her brother every weekend, her Mum 'an awful lot', and old school friends once a day for around an hour. Male as well as female students thus indulge in long chat calls to people off campus.

Calls to friends and colleagues at Newcastle tend to of be of short duration compared to those made to family and friends external from the University environment. In most cases they are used to initiate face to face contact:

> "If I want to meet someone who's not an Architect who I think may be in, just quickly [to say] 'Do you wanna have lunch? See you there!" I might ring 3 or 4 people, just ever so quickly, just to say, 'Are you coming over for lunch?'" – Michael.

Despite living in close proximity, however, it is not unusual for students to make chat calls within this context. Imogen, who makes 20 minute calls to friends elsewhere, will chat on the phone for up to 10 minutes with University friends. Abigail also chats to some of her University friends during the week:

> "Vanessa, yeah, I would sit and talk to her on the phone, especially cos we always tend to see Vanessa at the start of the week, when our timetables fit in more."

Students are also likely to participate in shorter arrangement or information calls with those external to the University:

> "My Mum rang me about 3 o'clock in the afternoon to remind me that I had to give blood at the University, cos all my mail about blood goes there. So I went the same afternoon and gave some blood" – Raf.

> "There's a few times I'll phone and ask Mum for a recipe, or if I needed something, and we can be not chatty" – Jodie.

Despite the free provision of email, phone communication visibly remains paramount. It allows individuals to *speak* to each other over distance, to participate in a conversation; it is important socially and emotionally. Although the data above refers to both wired and wireless telephony, phone use has recently changed as demonstrated in the sections below. Mobile phone use has increased communication amongst Newcastle University students:

> "Now I've got it, I do keep in touch with family and friends probably more than I do without it. Especially as I know that I get x amount of free minutes, and it makes me use the phone" – Jack.

> "I get to see [people] more, cos with a mobile I can arrange to see them and stuff. Cos otherwise, I'd be in a lot less contact with them" – Raf.

The subsequent sections in this chapter demonstrate the popularity and usage of mobile phones amongst the University of Newcastle sample. Although communication *per se* is clearly of importance to students, the thesis suggests that mobile telephony has helped shape current modes of communication amongst current students. In conjunction with prevalent aspects of contemporary student life that it also helps reify, as described in Chapter 8, mobile phone use is changing the way the majority of students communicate, within the population studied.

## 7.3 Mobile Phones - Ownership & Purchase Data

### 7.3.1 Introduction

This section is an overview of the (quantitative and qualitative) data produced regarding ownership and purchase of mobile phones by the undergraduate population studied. It includes information regarding adoption rates[1] and reasons for purchase, in terms of the population as a whole, and various associated factors. Ownership rates are represented in tabular format where necessary, and are integrated with extracts from interviews with students, their user diaries, and observations from the researcher's field notes.

### 7.3.2 Mobile Phone Adoption - General

> "I think - and whether it's the group I'm mixing with, it's hard to say isn't it - but I'd say 60 to 70% of the people I know have got mobile phones" – Rebecca.

In the period February to March 2000, the rate of mobile phone ownership amongst the sample studied was 66.0%. This figure is higher than the 48.0% of adults with mobile phone subscriptions during the same period, although it is consistent with the adoption rate of other young adults (Oftel 2002). The recent popularity of mobile telephony amongst Newcastle University undergraduates seems, therefore, to be somewhat related to the exponential increase in mobile ownership occurring simultaneously

[1] 'Adoption rate' refers simply to the percentage of the population who have acquired mobile phones.

within the wider UK population. Both observation and the opinions of students suggest a recent, rapid increase in mobile phones both outside and inside University:

> "Yeah, definitely, since first year. Cos I used to travel around on trains a lot in the first year, when I didn't have a car. Then a couple of months ago I went on a train and almost everyone had a mobile, and they were just chatting away merrily. You see them a lot more on campus – every now and again one goes off in a lecture, that kind of thing. So yeah – they're taking over the world!" – Jude.
>
> "The first two or three months I wasn't sucked in, but then…there was just a boom time when everybody seemed to get them, and so obviously everyone's asking for your number, you then get their number…you try them at home, you can't get hold of them, so immediately the next thing is – do they have a mobile? Yes? I'll try them on that" – Rebecca.

Despite similarities with rates of mobile phone ownership within the UK population, this thesis nevertheless finds mobile phone ownership, use and meaning amongst the population studied to be worthy of further examination. It believes that the popularity of mobile phones amongst the student population at Newcastle cannot solely be accounted for by the observation that mobile phones are something that other young people use, in a rapidly expanding (mass) market (as summarised in Chapter 4).

### 7.3.3 Adoption by age/year of study

When adoption rates are viewed in the context of age and year of study, it becomes apparent that mobile phone ownership depends on how old the student is, and how far they have progressed through their degree course, as Figures 7.2 and 7.3 overleaf demonstrate[2]:

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[2] All probability figures in the study have been calculated using the chi-square test of significance, other than where specified as being subject to an ANOVA test of significance.

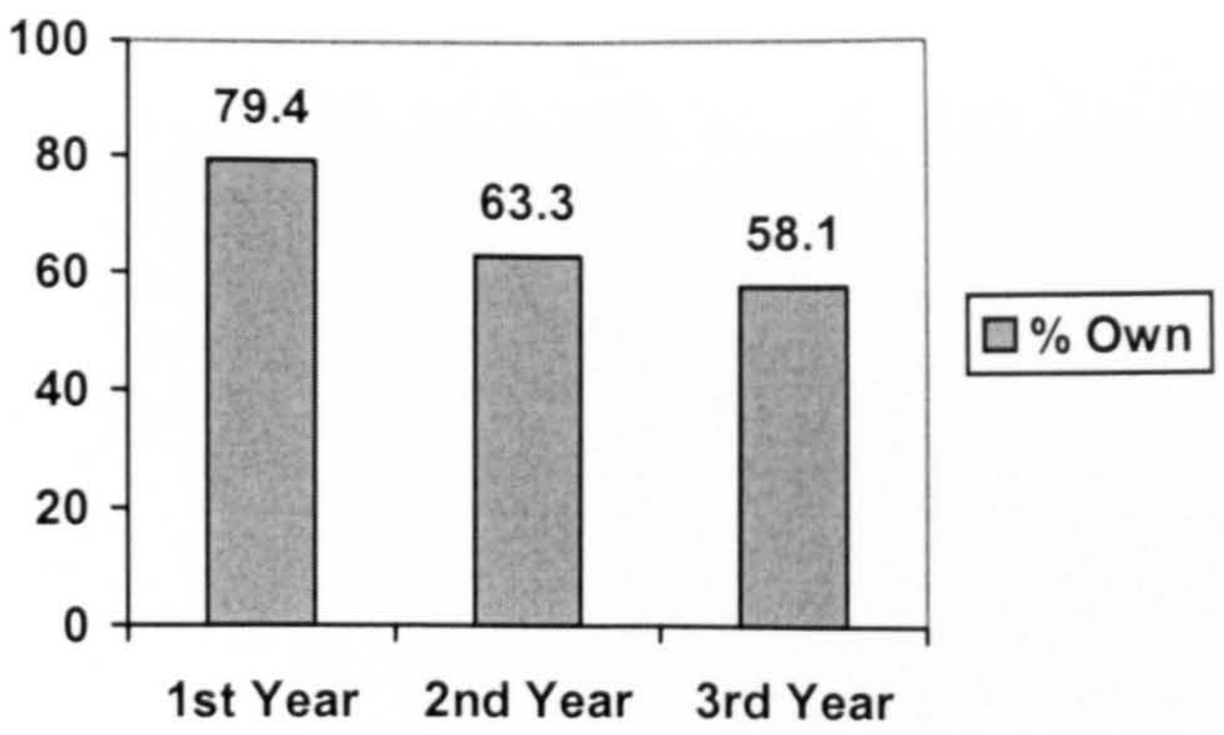


Figure 7.2: Mobile Phone Ownership by Year of Study in the Newcastle University Undergraduate Population February/March 2000 [P < .000].

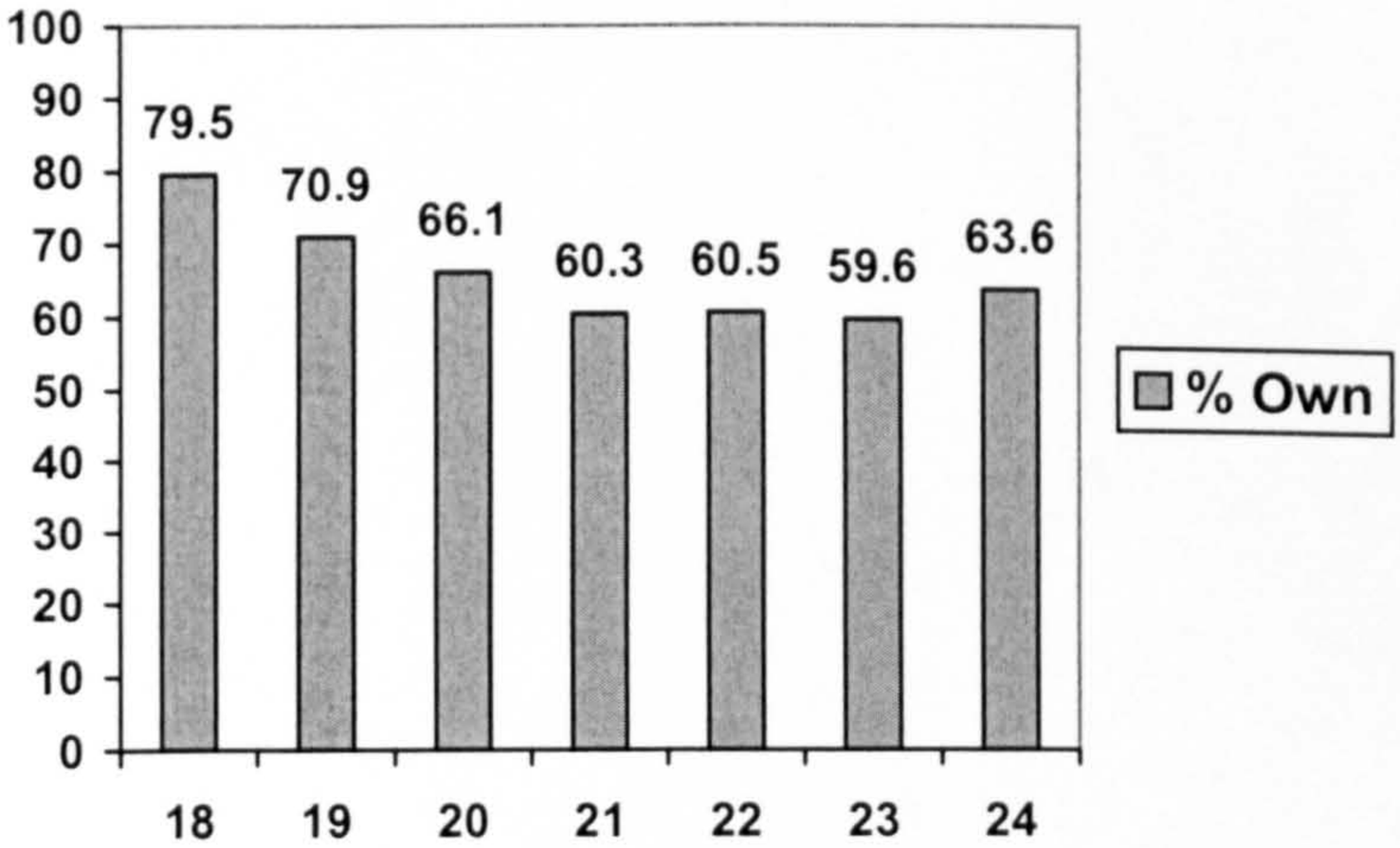


Figure 7.3: Mobile Phone Ownership by Age in the Newcastle University Undergraduate Population February/March 2000 [P = .016].

It is clear from the figures above that younger students, who are newer to the University and are in an earlier stage of study, are more likely to own mobile phones. The increasing popularity, acceptability, low price and visibility of mobile phones has, somehow, encouraged many younger students to adopt them, where older students have not. The popularity of mobile phones with teens and sixth form/college students (Taylor and Harper forthcoming; Ling 2000a) may be responsible for this, although qualitative evidence suggests that first year students are likely to have acquired a mobile immediately before beginning University, sometimes as part of the process of 'going away' to University:

"Dad had always said I'd be allowed one when I went to University" – Kirsty.

"I got it just before I came to University, so that's about a year and a half ago" – Lucie.

As such, it is possible that something about the University experience – or perceptions of it – may be responsible for the exponential increase in the popularity of mobile phones amongst the population studied, particularly its younger members. There may be a perception amongst every new intake of undergraduates, which increases over time and throughout market changes, that they can greatly benefit from mobile ownership within the student context, and may be at a disadvantage if they do not own a mobile phone.

Interview and observational data, from the time period April 2000 to August 2001, suggest that the exponential increase recorded at March 2000 continued, in parallel with that in the UK as a whole. (A longitudinal aspect to the survey may have been useful, as discussed in Chapter 9.) The quantitative trends observed also suggest that this is likely, as each new intake owns a higher proportion of mobile phones than the one before. That over time newer and younger students are more likely to buy their mobiles before University, correlates with a) the increased popularity of mobiles amongst the UK population as a whole, particularly young people, and possibly b) the increased desirability of mobile phones for going to University. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

### 7.3.4 Adoption by gender (and other non-significant variables)

It is worth noting that gender is not a significant variable determining levels of mobile phone ownership as Figure 7.4 overleaf shows:

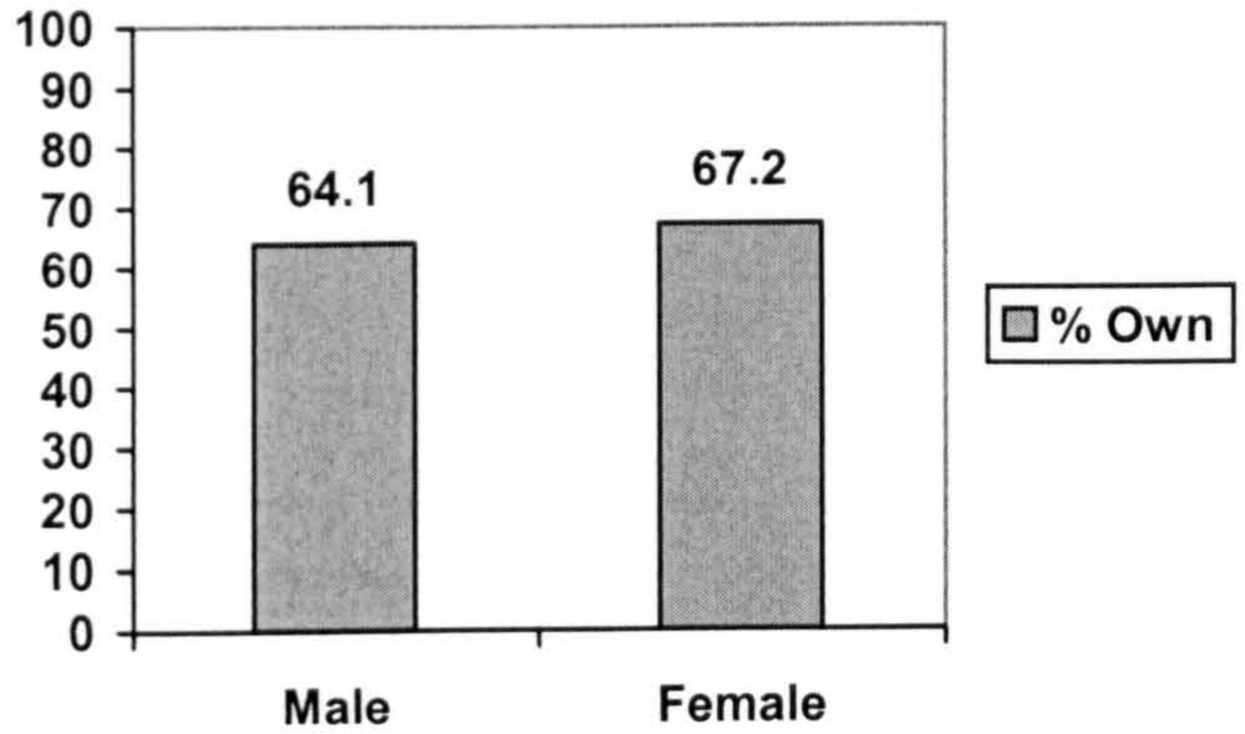


Figure 7.4: Mobile Phone Ownership by Gender (P = .303).

This data suggests that both male and female students clearly have a reason or reasons for owning a mobile phone. These may be gender specific, or related to the University context, or a combination of both. How male and female students use their phones does differ, however, as presented in section 7.4 below, and helps illuminate the ownership data.

There are other variables found not to be significant to mobile phone ownership in addition to gender, including levels of sociability and membership of a particular faculty. These insignificant results contribute to shifts in the development of the thesis, as discussed in Chapter 3. Speculating that mobile phone owners were more sociable than other students, for example, or that students in the Science faculty were more likely to own a mobile phone, was not corroborated by results. The data presented within this chapter therefore represents only part of the complete set of results that would be possible by exhausting every available permutation of the data, with only those that are statistically significant or relevant to the thesis included.

There is no significance, for example, between which Faculty students are enrolled in, and the rate of mobile phone adoption. The physical location or study schedules of some faculties may, however, make having a mobile phone more useful to some people than others, thus influencing mobile adoption rates (and use patterns). Michael studies Architecture, and his working late in a studio on campus contributed to why he bought his mobile:

"I mean, we have drawing boards at home to work, but obviously, there's the area and the layout and what we've got, in our studios – it's a lot better....We tend to work...up to the end of a 'Crit', which is the presentation of all your material...we're working all-nighters at times. So we normally manage a couple just before the end, and that means you're putting in 24 hours at the studio. So if people do wanna get in touch, it's always there, the phone's there" – Michael.

Although ethnic groups at Newcastle University are minorities amongst the UK undergraduate population, they are not necessarily excluded from owning mobile phones. A higher proportion of these students identifying as Indian students (86.4%) own mobiles than any other category; those identifying as Black Caribbean represent the lowest number of subscribers (50.0%); and 66.3% of those identifying as white own mobiles. Thus, ethnic and cultural background may have a part to play in mobile phone use and ownership. As the number of non-white students participating in the study is small, however, it is difficult to rely on these quantitative figures; their significance cannot be tested due to the low numbers of non-white students in the sample, and ethnicity was not pursued as a theme during the qualitative research. Suggestions for further study in Chapter 9 include reference to the use of technology by students from minority ethnic groups.

### 7.3.5 Adoption by educational background and income

As Figure 7.5 below demonstrates, educational background is also a determinant of mobile phone ownership:

| | (State) Comprehensive school | Sixth form/ Vocational college | Grammar/High (non-fee paying) school | Independent (public) school | Other fee-paying school |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Students own** | 56.9 % | 66.0 % | 67.6 % | 73.1 % | 67.3 % |

Figure 7.5: Mobile Phone Ownership By Educational Background (P = .01).

Ownership levels between school-leavers of various educational establishments differ, with a particular discrepancy between (state) comprehensive and independent school students. Regression analysis, however, suggests that this is because income and educational background are also related, with disposable income levels being the more significant of the two in mobile phone adoption, as Figure 7.6 demonstrates:

| Variable | Correlation coefficient (r) | Significance (P) |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | -.110 | .001 |
| **Educational Background** | -.001 | .981 |

Figure 7.6: Results of Regression Analysis Relating Mobile Phone Ownership to Income and Educational Background (P = .003; ANOVA test applied).

Mobile phone owners are more likely to have a higher disposable income than non-owners, as Figure 7.7 demonstrates:

| | Mean | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---|---|---|
| **Mobile owner** | £221.61 | £134.06 |
| **Non-owner** | £189.85 | £97.92 |

Figure 7.7: Mean Income After Rent For Mobile Owners And Non-Owners (P = .004; ANOVA test applied).

Correspondingly, those students attending independent schools are more likely to have a higher disposable income than those who have attended a state school, as Figure 7.8 overleaf demonstrates:

| | Mean | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---|---|---|
| **Public school** | £237.28 | £104.62 |
| **State school** | £194.68 | £106.47 |

Figure 7.8: Mean Income After Rent According To Different Educational Backgrounds (P = .000; ANOVA test applied).

As there is also correlation between disposable income, and number of calls per week and average monthly spend, such figures, combined with the various cost-cutting strategies listed in section 7.4 below, suggest that some students do take how they allocate their income seriously. Despite the primary importance of income, however, educational background does remain related to mobile ownership in terms of the class discourse at Newcastle University, which affects perceptions of how mobiles are used as presented in section 7.5.

### 7.3.6 Adoption and place of residence

Although there is not a statistically significant association between mobile phone ownership and place of (termtime) residence, mobile users do mention problems with using wired phones in Halls as a reason for 'going mobile'. Very few University rooms are equipped with private wired phone lines, and students thus relied, until recently, on a limited number of communal phone lines in their accommodation:

> "Well, I didn't really want one to start with. I thought – 'Oh God, I hate people who go around with them!' [laughs]. And then I got there, and our Halls – I didn't have a phone in my room, and the nearest phone that took incoming calls was about five minutes walk away..." – Imogen.

If some people in Halls have mobiles and others do not, this can lead to a form of social exclusion:

> "Everyone I knew had a mobile. Not so much the people I knew in the English Department, but on my corridor, I don't think there was one person who didn't

> have a mobile phone...So I did feel kind of left out when I didn't have one. And, because people would be like – they'd met up for lunch, and I'd go 'Why didn't you invite me?' And they'd go, 'Well, there was no way of contacting you.' I was no longer a part of that" – Jessica.

Having a mobile can also play a crucial part in establishing relationships with others in Halls during one's first few weeks at the University:

> "In Halls as well, when you didn't know that many people, it was very much number swapping at the beginning. Just to – you didn't want to go to supper on your own, so you'd phone 2 girls from the same block: 'Hi, what time're you going to supper? OK, well…' and you'd end up having a chat to someone 5 floors above you. But it was all a bit –'Is she in? I don't want to be on my own!' Whereas as that got on, you sort of, didn't care anymore, you weren't that worried, or, you knew enough people" – Francesca.

Although Halls do provide some (wired) phones, undergraduates can find this provision inadequate. It can cause problems trying to communicate with the external world, such as friends and family:

> "It was really crap! Like in Castle Leazes, they have a phone per landing, and people can ring in, and somebody'll shout for you. Whereas at Henderson, somebody'll ring Henderson, and there's a board at reception. And they'll pin – somebody'll ring up and say, 'Can I speak to Lucie Whitworth?' And they'll say, 'I'll just see if she's around,' when you're blatantly not going to be pottering past reception when somebody rings for you. So they'll just pin a note at reception saying, 'Lucie Whitworth, so-and-so called for you, will ring back at 6.30.' And if you haven't seen the notice then you're not gonna get the call...and then they'll transfer it to a booth which is in reception, there were not phones in any of the blocks" – Lucie.

> "That was a nightmare actually! I think that is possibly the only time when a mobile would have been really useful. Because we had a phone on the floor, 19 girls, 1 phone, incoming calls only. And so otherwise you had to trek all the way down to reception and there was a payphone, that was it. Absolute nightmare trying to stay in touch with people" – Amy.

"Well, we had a phone on the floor that people could ring up, but after the first month or so someone stole ours. So I had a lot of problems getting in touch with people. I mean, there were payphones downstairs where you could call someone – but no one could call you. So that's mainly why I bought this [mobile] phone – I didn't think I could manage without it this year [in University flats]" – Alex.

"I struggled for the first couple of months, and then I bought a mobile for the first year. And then kept it for the year – didn't want it last year.... Why? I wouldn't have used it...It was just good in Castle Leazes because we didn't have a telephone on our corridor. To be phoned, I would have had to know that they were gonna phone. The corridor downstairs....I would have had to sit in a draughty corridor" – Jodie.

"Well, erm, I wanted a mobile phone. And, erm, cos in my flats last year, we didn't – I was living in Richardson Road, student accommodation, university accommodation. And, erm, like, we didn't have a phone in the flat…And, erm, I sort of though, 'I need to get a mobile phone. Cos like, a few of – I couldn't contact my Mum, any of my friends from back home, and also like a few of my friends in different Halls [of Residence], which is like forty minutes away. It's forty minutes just to go knock on somebody's door and they're not in" – Joshua.

### 7.3.7 Adoption by relationship status

Adoption of mobile telephony is not dependent on whether one is in a relationship, to any statistical significance (P = .35). Qualitative data, however, suggests that students who are in a relationship with someone outside the Newcastle area are more likely to benefit from owning a mobile phone than other couples or single students.

Jessica, for example, bought her mobile specifically to talk to her boyfriend who lived in university accommodation at Durham University:

> "I got a mobile for the purpose of pretty much talking to him, cos there was no phones to be used at Castle Leazes. Only phones that it cost a lot to ring a mobile, and can't take incoming calls unless you fix it up in advance. And there

are only 3 phones where you can get incoming calls and you don't get any privacy."

Being in a relationship or not also influences the manner in which mobile phones are used, as presented in section 7.4.

### 7.3.8 Purchase

Most students take pro-active measures to acquire a mobile phone. The majority of mobile phones used by owners in the sample were bought by students - 53.7% of mobile phone owners bought their current phone themselves.[3] Of the 46.3% of mobile phone owners who didn't buy their phone, 73.7% of these had their phone provided by a family member; 10.5% of this number were given their mobile by a partner; and 13.0% received their mobile from Barclaycard, who were at the time giving away mobile phones to those signing up for a 'Student Barclaycard'.

Purchase by a parent rarely stems from issues of surveillance and concern within the family relationship of the sort that Green (2002) associates within families with teenagers. Parents of university students are more likely to attempt to *dissuade* their university-age offspring from purchasing mobiles, because of concerns they themselves have with cost and alleged health risks. They are nevertheless likely to succumb to the entreaties of their offspring to provide mobiles:

> "I'd been thinking about it for a while, and then… I actually went down to the Cosmopolitan Show in London…and they had a special offer on 2 phones, they were cheaper, and my sister had just got a job and a car, and she was maybe considering getting a phone, so I just phoned up Mum and said 'Look, they've got a special offer on two phones' (plus we'd be able to speak to each other for cheaper because it was the same network)… I said 'Will you buy them for us?' and she said 'Yes'!" – Rebecca.
>
> "Well it was my birthday coming up so I asked [my] Mum to get me one… She didn't mind paying for it. She doesn't really know a lot about phones, and she was worried about getting the right one" – Alex.

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[3] Albeit with parental money in some cases.

> "It's just a fact that my Mum gave me a mobile phone for Xmas. [I said] 'Where did you get it from?' [She said] 'I don't know, they said it was the best in the shop'" - Tom.

These extracts also demonstrate that mobile buyers are not necessarily informed about the product that they are buying. This is the case for student users as well as parents. Particularly in the case of a student's first mobile, it is rare that they or the person buying the mobile has much knowledge concerning the product they are purchasing. Michael was the only individual interviewed that had conducted in-depth research regarding his handset and service provider:

> "I chose Orange because it's a, generally, a better service than Vodafone. They provide on my phone an information service – news, weather, stocks, shares, *et cetera* – which you can't get on Vodafone."

In general, the advantages and disadvantages of specific networks, talkplans or handsets do not become visible until student users begin to utilise their phone in the University context. They believe that mobile phones will be useful, but they do not fully appreciate *how* useful until some time has elapsed. It is subsequently likely that, if they upgrade[4] their handset or change their service provider, they will have reasons for doing so relevant to being a seasoned student mobile phone user.

### 7.3.9 Network subscription

Amongst the population of student mobile users responding to the survey, 29.8% subscribe to BT Cellnet; 15.7% to One2One; 20.5% to Orange; and 33.5% to Vodafone.[5] These figures are not dissimilar from UK mobile users as a whole (Oftel 2002) - choice of mobile service provider thus seems to correspond across both markets. Network distribution may thus be arbitrary, subject to the same influences as other sectors of the UK population (advertising campaigns, the desirability of certain talkplans or handsets, and so on). Data also suggests, however, that different groups of

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[4] The process of 'upgrading' involves exchanging one's old handset for a new 'better' one. How much this costs depends on both the quality of the model and the talkplan subscribed to. If, for example, one is only upgrading to the 'next best' handset after 12 months on a contract, this may incur no cost.

[5] 0.5% subscribed to overseas network providers.

student users are likely to subscribe *en masse* to a common network, so that calls between them might be cheaper (especially using free minutes, as explained below).

87.0% of users have friends or family on the same network, with an average of 6.8 friends or family members on the same network. (Friends seem to be more influential in network choice than family, according to the qualitative data.) Which network this is tends to depend on that chosen, often indiscriminately, by the first one or two student users in the group to purchase a mobile:

> "I think, generally, I took the lead. A couple were accidentally on Orange that I didn't know about, but then people that started buying phones after went for Orange" – Michael.

> "Most of my friends are on Vodafone as well, so it's more convenient…I don't know how it happened. Cos the people who – my friends here, they got their phones at the same time as me. Vodafone had 500 free minutes which is quite a good deal, quite cheap…we just sort of got it at the same time" – Imogen.

Other reasons for preferring certain networks include their provision of an adequate signal in the student's home, as with Kirsty:

> "There is a reason why we've got two. It's because we…can't get any signal in this basement so we've had to buy Vodafone just for using in the flat. And what I've done, I've got this cheap, Pay as You Go thing, I only had to buy a SIM-card and I put it in one of my boyfriend's old phones. That's [points to the Vodafone mobile] just so he can ring me if, like, I want to talk to him in private or something. But I'd still take my [other] one out with me every day."

As it is common for student users to treat their mobiles as personal phones, often used in Halls or private homes despite the provision of fixed line facilities, procuring a signal in their place of residence can be of great importance.

For some student users the talkplan provided by the network is the prime reason for choosing a specific mobile phone package, and is not necessarily related to either network signal or which network friends subscribe to. Lucie's monthly bills are quite high but include free minutes, and are part of a package she deliberately chose to suit her calling patterns:

"Two and a half hours a month. And that's on peak and off peak to any One2One phone or any landline...and text messages are 4p to other One2Ones, and 10p to any other mobile. Which is like one of the cheapest deals there is. And although it's £25 a month you don't tend to spend much more than....you know, I could be on a timeplan which is costing me £11.99 a month or something, but when it comes down to it, it's 40p to ring another network. Whereas to ring another network on my phone isn't included in my minutes, but it only costs me 20p a minute which isn't that bad at all. And that's what I was looking at because I do call a lot of other mobiles on my phone."

61% of all UK subscribers are on 'pre-pay' or 'Pay As You Go' packages during the research period, with this figure rising to 75% amongst those in lower income groups; pre-pay is most popular amongst those homes without a fixed line phone (Oftel 2002). It might be expected, therefore, that a high percentage of student users are on such packages due to their limited income and problems with fixed line provision. By contrast, however, 41.8% of student owners have a monthly subscription and 19.1% a yearly subscription, with just 39.1% using Pay as You Go.

This preference may be accounted for by several factors. Firstly, students are provided with a regular income that should enable them to pay phone bills at specified intervals, without having to worry about the inconvenience of purchasing 'top-up cards':

> "It's a twelve-month job, and this was £120, so £10 a month line rental. I paid it upfront, and it just makes it a bit easier, not having to worry about line rental" – Tom.

Also, the 16.7% of parents who pay for their children's phone calls may find post-pay an easier and possibly cheaper way of dealing with bills than providing money for cards. The popularity of the 'free minutes' provided with many contract talkplans is also likely to be a major factor in choice of talkplan. Free minutes allow consumers to make non-billed calls to those on the same network or on landlines, at designated times, up to the value of, for example, one hour per day or two hours per month. Although 93.8% of mobile owners do have access to a wired phone, using the mobile for chatting with the provision of free minutes is an attractive feature of mobile phones for student users who, living away from a home environment, appreciate being able to

communicate over distance via their inclusive minutes without worrying about running up large bills:

> "I have free minutes on my Vodafone, after 7 [pm], so anyone else that's Vodafone I can call free after 7 [pm]" – Phillippa.

Nevertheless, free minutes can lull individuals into a false sense of security regarding the cost of mobile calls, encouraging a habit of phoning with little regard for call duration which may be difficult to break:

> "Sometimes I can't be bothered to wait 'til six or seven o'clock, and I'm like, go on, it's five [o'clock], 'What's happening?'"– Tom.

As an aside, the fact that some parents (24.7%) do pay for their children's phone calls and/or their subscription to the network, is representative of how student users remain linked to the parental unit even when living away from home.

### 7.3.10 Handsets

41% of the student mobile users in the sample own Nokia handsets, the largest percentage for any handset manufacturer. This is not unusual as 'Nokias' are ubiquitous in UK society as a whole; they are regarded as both technically proficient and fashionable, with a range of advertising campaigns aimed at different social groups, particularly young people. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Nokias are the most popular handsets with student mobile users at Newcastle University. Qualitative data suggests, however, that the aesthetic and fashionable aspects of mobile phone handsets are not particularly important to student users. They do not perceive Nokia as a stylish brand name as they would with clothing and other accessories; any allegiance to the Nokia brand seems not to have evolved from a sense of its being a fashionable brand, but from it being a tried and tested product that combines aspects of practicality, cost-effectiveness and style.

Although some student users may complain that their mobile phone can be compared to a 'brick'– i.e. it is large, unwieldy and without any individual characteristics – they do not seem to spend large amounts of money upgrading to newer or more stylish models. A value system does exist within the population studied, that admires aspects of handset design and usability, including shape, size, weight and style, but the most

important aspect about mobile handsets is of owning one, regardless of what it looks like (Figure 7.17 on page 180 confirms the homogeneity of models owned):

> "They have the clippy-onny things [fascias], you know, you change the colour, but to me – urrgh, what's the point? One colour's the same as another – it's functional not aesthetic" - Rebecca.

The most important aspect when buying a mobile phone seems to be affordability. A combination of factors influences student choice of mobiles, as demonstrated in Figure 7.9 below, with cost the most important factor for a higher proportion of persons than any other factor:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Make of handset** | 25.8% |
| **Size of handset** | 50.8% |
| **Colour of handset** | 24.4% |
| **Weight of handset** | 26.8% |
| **Overall handset style** | 43.6% |
| **Cost** | 62.7% |
| **Choice of Network** | 47.8% |
| **Another reason** | 20.3% |
| **None of the Above** | 13.7% |

Figure 7.9: What Factors Affected Your Choice Of Mobile Phone? (Multiple answers permitted.)

Cost is most important here, although a substantial minority of users also state that size and overall style of the handset are important. This research took place at a time when newer, slimline handsets were entering the marketplace, which partially explains why size is influential (together with the knowledge that, for example, these handsets can be

conveniently stored in a pocket when not in use). Qualitative data nevertheless supports the finding that, although other reasons influence mobile phone purchase (including how mobiles are used, as described in section 7.3), in terms of the actual mobile phone package student users find cost more important than anything else:

> "I didn't pay much attention to the various types of deals. It doesn't cost me all that much and I can make phone calls on it and that's all that counts" – Alex.

> "My brother's got this real small one. He's working at the moment so he's been able to afford a really small, "the best", phone, and he's like, 'it's better than yours!' And I was like – 'no it's not! A phone's a phone!' It gives me free minutes...500 free minutes a month...7 at night till 8 in the morning...I get reduced text to Vodafone" - Tom

Although student users have the ability to discriminate between phones aesthetically, it does not mean that they spend excess amounts on expensive handsets:

> "I wouldn't really like to have a massive brick, but if it was a difference between having a brick and spending £100, I'd have the brick" – Imogen.

> "Nowadays, you can get almost any phone you want on any contract. So the contract was the most important thing" – Rafael

> "It would be nice to have one that looked okay. But it's not gonna go out and shop around to find the best looking mobile phone. I'll just have one that looks alright" – Jude

The desire to own a superior model does exist, but is rarely important enough to cause student users to spend more money on a handset; the money they spend on network subscription and call charges is usually considered enough. Certain handsets may be desirable, but they are not representative of status. Within Newcastle University, the style of one's mobile is not related to identity or social exclusion. This contrasts with research on pre-University teenagers and suggests that students may have different uses for their mobiles than display and the 'hyper-coordination' referred to by Ling and Yttri (2002), as further discussed in Chapter 8.

### 7.3.11 Access to wired telephony

As explored more fully in the section on use below, the ease of access to wired telephony can influence mobile phone use at the University. There is a clear relationship between whether one has access to a private line or payphone, and whether one has a mobile, as Figure 7.10 shows:

| | Mobile owner | Non-owner |
|---|---|---|
| **Private wired phone access** | 69.5% | 85.8% |
| **Public payphone access** | 24.3% | 13.7% |
| **No wired access** | 6.2% | 0.6% |

Figure 7.10: Access To Telephony For Mobile Owners And Non-Owners – Frequencies.

The table above demonstrates that the less easily one is able to access a private phone, the more likely one is to have a mobile phone. This may mean that undergraduates buy mobiles because wired telephony is inadequate, or that mobile users do not install wired telephony because they do not need to, or a combination of both these factors.

As mentioned above, living in Halls and using payphones is perceived by some students as an inconvenience. Sharing a fixed line phone in a private house can also be problematic. Jessica is not getting on with the people with whom she shares a house, and does not enjoy the lack of privacy engendered by their shared (wired) phone. During her second year, she found it problematic trying to talk to her boyfriend when overheard by others. Many other students state that being overheard whilst on the phone is an annoyance.

Although almost 39% of student users rely on their mobile as their main phone, mobile ownership does not preclude using wired telephony, with many undergraduates using a combination of wired and wireless telephony. An important reason for this is cost. Jude, for example, has pondered the idea of wholly switching from a landline to a mobile:

> "If mobile phone calls get cheaper than landline calls, then yeah. But not at the minute."

Raf and his housemates have recently moved into shared private housing and are beginning to realise how expensive relying on mobile phone use is:

> "Everyone has got a mobile phone. And to begin with, we thought we wouldn't get a landline cos everyone has a mobile phone and it's easier to sort out the bills and stuff. But I think people still want one, they've changed their minds now they've opened their phone bills!"

Cost effectiveness is an important consideration for maintaining this combined approach to telephony. Imogen uses her mobile to speak to people on landlines and the same network using her free minutes, and her landline to ring mobiles, as she considers this the cheapest option. Rebecca uses her mobile for shorter calls and making arrangements, and the wired phone for longer chat calls. She says that it would be too expensive to make all calls via her mobile:

> "They'd probably last for less than a minute. And they'll be to find out where somebody is. That's what most of my calls are, quite short, 'Where are you? What you doing? Do you wanna meet up?' kind of calls, and not, like, really long winded…because that's gonna cost a lot."

Similarly, people phoning student users generally find it cheaper to make calls to a wired phone than a mobile, and thus may try this as the first port of call:

> "[The wired phone]'s normally quite busy. I've got two landlines at home – one for the computer, and one for the phone...it rang about five times last night. That wasn't too bad, that was quite good, and it was, sort of, half family and half friends, so...People sort of always try me, in the evening anyway, at the house first, obviously cos it's be cheaper. And then they try me on my mobile after that. It works out fairly well" – Michael.

Mobile phones are also used to mediate usage of wired phones, for example to arrange a time to ring on a landline phone. Having returned from a weekend spent with her boyfriend and family, Samantha's user diary shows that she received a call to her mobile from her boyfriend, who 'wanted to check how I was and what I've been up to tonight. Says he has lots of work and can't hear me very well. Had already tried house

phone but it was busy. Asked me to phone back when phone free.' She duly made a 12-second call to him via her mobile, 'just to tell him land line was now free and he could phone me back when he was ready. Said he would do so in 5 minutes', thus enabling him to save money by ringing wired phone to wired phone, and to ensure ease of communication, as they were experiencing problems with their mobile signals due to bad weather.

### 7.3.12 Relinquishing and non-ownership of mobile phones

Of the 34% of students in the sample who do not own a mobile phone, almost a third have previously been mobile phone owners but chose to relinquish ownership of them. It is important to recognise that merely because acquiring a mobile occurs, it will not necessarily remain in use. This suggests that perhaps certain situations or stages of student life create more of a desire to have a mobile phone than others. Jodie, for example, used a mobile phone in her first year because she found the fixed line provision in Halls inadequate for her needs. When living in private accommodation with fixed line access she relinquished her mobile as she felt she did not need it anymore. Jessica bought a mobile during her first year to keep in contact with her boyfriend in Durham, as they both lived in accommodation with wired phone provision that they perceived as inadequate. A combination of feeling trapped in a contract, her mother's worries about mobile phones, and her own worries about cost, however, led Jessica to get rid of her mobile phone when she had access to a wired phone in private accommodation.[6]

Although students have access to reserves of credit as related in Chapter 6, some perceive the cost of running a mobile phone to be prohibitive, and this is cited as a reason for refusing to acquire one. Others stress that they do not want to be available all the time, or that mobile phones interfere with face to face communication:

> "It's so anti-social! Why would you need to be contacted so much? if you can't phone someone, if you can't wait till you get home....Why should you have to have a very loud conversation down the street? Or if someone else is with you....there's that kind of interruption "– Jodie.

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[6] Interestingly, Jessica now finds wired telephony inadequate, as per her earlier comments.

Media attention regarding potential health risks may also dissuade students from acquiring or keeping mobile phones. Others insist they do not 'need' a mobile phone. 'Need' is an important concept for students. This thesis perceives it as relative, simultaneously arguing that there are certain aspects of the student experience that contribute to how the need for a mobile phone is perceived. Some of the individuals in the study did not acquire their mobile phones because of any particular need, but after using them within the university context for some time, did not feel that they could relinquish a tool they found incredibly useful.

### 7.3.13 Conclusion

Section 7.3 has contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative data regarding ownership, purchase and non-ownership of mobile telephony, and the reasons influencing these aspects. When integrated with the content of other chapters within the thesis as occurs in Chapter 8, ownership data and the factors relating to it are shown to be directly related to the nature of contemporary student life at the University of Newcastle.

## 7.4 Use

### 7.4.1 Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative research has produced a plethora of material regarding how (and in part why) the Newcastle University undergraduates studied use mobile phones. This is presented below, providing a comprehensive picture of mobile usage by contemporary students.

### 7.4.2 Frequency, Duration and Spend

The mean number of calls made by student mobile users per week is 15.38 (SD = 16.26). Figure 7.11 overleaf further illustrates the range of calls made by showing the percentage of users making mobile calls in the categories designated:

| 0-10 calls | 11-20 calls | 21-50 calls | 50 + calls |
|---|---|---|---|
| 55.0% | 24.4% | 17.8% | 3.2% |

Figure 7.11: Amount Of Mobile Calls Made By Students Per Week – Frequencies.

This data suggests that the number of calls made by the majority of student users is not therefore particularly high in quantitative terms. Similarly, the amount of money spent on mobile calls does not seem overly excessive - the mean average spent on calls per month is £19.16 (SD = £24.09). Despite a range of between £0 and £210 per month spent on mobile phone calls, the majority of undergraduates, 52%, spend just £0 to £10 per month on calls, with a further 22.1% of student users spending between £11 and £20 per month on calls. Although there are obviously some student users making large numbers of calls and spending lots of money on the calls they make, these are exceptions to the trend. There is, as might be expected, correlation[7] between the number of calls made and the amount of money spent on calls, although, as duration of calls remains an unknown factor, this may not be as straightforward as it seems, as data below suggests.

Mobile phone call frequency, duration and spend is subject to a number of different influences within the student population, that can be difficult to measure and/or separate from one another. There remain, however, several factors contributing to how and why calls are made (and in certain ways), that are demonstrated by the data produced. The amount and duration of mobile phone calls made and money spent differs between student users depending on certain factors. For example, student users make different frequencies of calls to different types of people. Parents and friends from a home area tend to be recipients (or instigators) of regularly spaced calls of a longer duration that involve chatting. By contrast, contacts in the local area, i.e. the University may be called more often for a shorter duration, for location or information purposes:

> "It is just generally, 'Where are you? What are you doing?' or 'Are you going out tonight? Did you have a good night last night?' It's those kind of conversations…I'll ring friends from home and I'll speak to them on the phone [for] 20 minutes" – Lucie.

Calls can also involve different amounts of spend, related to their duration, frequency and the time of day when made. Such influences can affect how both wireless and wired phones are used, as described below. There are no set rules, however, and users have their own personal methods that they put into place.

A primary factor influencing mobile phone usage is that of cost. Although the cost of signing up for a mobile phone subscription has decreased in recent years, it is perhaps surprising that University students consider running a mobile phone when their finances may be limited. Mobiles are found by the research to have a particular utility within the undergraduate population, that deems their purchase and use necessary to a majority, but this does not necessarily entail a large proportion of student finances being spent on calls. A minority do run up bills that can be perceived as extortionate, but as with other items and services, many individuals do realise the important of budgeting and implement communication strategies with the least (perceived) cost.

For example, the number of calls made can be dependent on what network one's contacts are on, and although it is difficult to illustrate this using quantitative data, interviews reveal that certain use strategies are employed that are linked to cost of calls. It is common for mobile owners to know whether the people they are calling subscribe to the same network as them or not. If they do, mobile users are less concerned about making more and/or longer calls to these numbers, as these would be relatively cheap (and 'free' at certain times on some talkplans). Michael makes a point of asking if people are on the same network as him, and if they are not:

> "I won't phone them half as much if they're not, no way!"

Imogen, who subscribes to the Vodafone network, refuses to use her mobile to call people on other networks because of the cost factor:

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[7] In cases such as this where correlation is referred to without a significance level, this is due to a number of *cells containing less than* 5 despite extensive recoding and thus not being recognised as statistically significant.

> "Say if I phoned [someone who subscribed to] Cellnet, or some other company, then I'd call on the landline...People on the same network I do tend to phone more than people who aren't."

It is also common for student users to restrict their calls to 'off-peak' times or when their free minutes operate:

> "If I have to call the Doctor and make an appointment, you have to do it 9 to 5, I would do that. [But] I don't generally call 9 to 5. I would do it, if I could...after 7" – Isobel.

> "I'd rather go to a phone box and put money in a phone, because then I'd know that I'd spent my money...I would generally, during the day. Cos if I want to ring my boyfriend, and he's on a Vodafone mobile, then that's like 70 pence a minute or something. It'd be cheaper for me to ring from a phone box" – Kirsty.

> "I get 500 free minutes. And I would try not to, ideally, use anything apart from that, in the evening, phoning to Vodafone and a landline. But sometimes you have to phone people on other networks or before 7 [pm]. But generally if it's a call I'm paying for, I'll try and make it last less than 2 minutes" – Imogen.

For those student users on pre-pay or 'Pay As You Go' phones, call costs tend to be high. Some complain about how easy it is to spend money on one's phone without realising it on this type of talkplan:

> "It's 'Pay as you Go'. And like, I discovered that I don't have to buy a voucher and I can just whip out my credit card and type the number into my phone...I keep spending" – Joshua.

> "It was 50p a minute to ring any number. You had to go to Barclaycard, because you only had the phone if you had a Barclaycard, and they take money off the Barclaycard. It's a bit of a scam, really. 50p a minute is ridiculous, it's so expensive" – James.

According to the statistical data, however, student users with pre-pay packages are more likely to restrict their call spend to between £0 and £20 on calls than other users. It is possible, therefore, that recognition that calls are expensive helps restrict use.

Although pre-pay is perceived as expensive, and does not include any free minutes, it can provide a useful way of budgeting:

> "It's pay as you go. I reckoned that was probably the best idea. So you just buy vouchers when you need them" - Alex.

> "It's good having a Pay As You Go because you can actually tell how much you're putting into it. Say, one week you've already put £30 in, and you think, 'I haven't got much money', then you just don't buy a voucher...The monthly one was – if you've got a job and an income, then it's no problem, because you use that, and it comes out of your bank...But if you get a student and you've got a limited amount of money...especially if I'm getting £50 a month, and half of that'll go on the telephone...Like, last week, I didn't have any money last week. So I had to go without a phone card for a week, which is annoying, but...If you had a bill you'd carry on using it, and suddenly at the end of month, when you haven't got any money, you get more in debt" – James.

Attempted self-restraint is just one cost-reducing strategy employed by student users. If access to a fixed line phone is relatively unproblematic, some individuals use this to contact people on different networks in order to save the expense of calling them via a mobile. Mobile phone use is also dependent on the provision and use of fixed line telephony. 93.8% of mobile users in the study have access to a private wired phone or payphone; 38.4% of these individuals use this phone more than their mobile. As might be expected, those student users who mainly use a wired phone have lower bills; those who mainly use a mobile have higher bills ($P < .001$). Qualitative data shows that individuals are more likely to switch to a wired phone to make (longer) chat calls than in the case of (shorter) calls involving news and arrangement-making. James, for example, uses a wired phone for 'long social chats' and his mobile to call one of his University friends in Jesmond to make a social arrangement or participate in a quick chat. His calls on the wired phone are between 20 and 40 minutes, whereas his calls on the mobile rarely exceed 4 minutes.

Figure 7.12 overleaf shows the different types of phones used by mobile owners when making different types of calls:

| | Mobile only | Wired only | Mobile/wired |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Chat calls** | 33.9% | 36.0% | 28.5% |
| **News/Information calls** | 41.5% | 15.8% | 39.0% |

Figure 7.12: Different Types Of Phones Used By Mobile Owners To Make Different Calls - Frequencies.

This data demonstrates that mobiles are less popular when making chat calls. This is partly the result of the various cost cutting strategies implemented by mobile users, but may also be related to the fact that more information calls are likely to be made on the move, away from fixed line phone access. It is also possible that the number of mobile chat calls is lower because some student users avoid using their mobiles extensively for these longer types of calls, citing uncertainty regarding the impact of mobile phones on physical health as a reason for this behaviour.

Although ownership rates are not affected by gender as a variable, to some degree usage is. The mean average number of calls made by women on their mobiles is 16.65, and, by men, 20.15 ($P = .001$; ANOVA test applied).[8] There is no parallel significant difference in spend, however, which suggests that women are perhaps making longer calls, making more calls at off-peak times, or making more calls to different networks on their mobiles (another possibility is that they underestimate, and/or men overestimate, the number of calls made).

Both male and female individuals say that they participate in chats of long duration on the phone, and implement cost-effective strategies. Data shows, however, that women are more likely to use wired phones for chatting than men (although there is no significant gender difference in how information calls are made):

[8] 14.2% of women, however, and only 7.8% of men said that this was less calls than they usually made.

| | Mobile only | | Wired only | | Mobile/wired | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| **Chat calls** | 41.2% | 29.3% | 26.6% | 42.1% | 32.2% | 28.6% |

Figure 7.13: Types Of Phone Used For Chatting By Gender.

As mentioned above, men make more calls than women, but do not spend more money on calls. As the mobile calls they are making tend to involve longer chat calls, which would usually cost more than the shorter calls made by women on their mobile, this similarity in expenditure is perhaps explained by more women making calls at more expensive times, or more men using free minutes for calls (women users are also more likely to be on a Pay as You Go scheme than men). Again, learning more about call duration may have made these speculations more concrete, as discussed in Chapter 9.

In addition to opting to use wired phones at certain times or for certain calls, mobile users also speak of regularly using email to contact friends outside of the University context. This enables individuals to keep their friends informed of what is happening, for example on a weekly basis, and make phone calls on a more occasional basis. As free[9] email provision exists for students at Newcastle University, this can be a cost-efficient manoeuvre:

> "You tend to contact people more by email from home... because then you can say everything you want to say, and you just have like, you know what's going on in their lives so you can just ring them up and, like, you don't need to talk for, like, even though you want to talk for hours on end, you can just...speak to them...for about 20 minutes, and you can still talk to them via emails and stuff" – Lucie.

Speaking with friends on the phone remains, however, an important part of undergraduate communication, with email remaining a complementary method.

[9] University fees are paid by, or on behalf of, all students enrolled at Newcastle, so this facility is not strictly 'free'; however, as students are not directly billed for it, it is perceived by them as such.

Mobile phones allow individuals to communicate directly to a handset that is found on, or near, another's person. The mobile phone is easy to carry around and keep switched on; a computer can only be accessed at certain times. When communicating via a mobile phone, one knows that one's message is being directly and immediately conveyed to another's receiver, rather than dwelling in cyberspace for an unspecified time until downloaded. Although checking email can be a routine activity, there is no guarantee of when messages will be received:

> "I don't think emails are quite the [same] – they're not a conversation are they? They're just sort of a news report of what you've been doing, and maybe the odd question if they choose to reply to the question you've asked them in the email...whereas if you're on the phone you can have a conversation and get a bit of feedback on what you're saying" – Isobel.

The popularity of text messaging amongst the population is also partially due to an attempt to save money, as has been found for teenagers (Grinter and Eldridge 2001). Although using SMS is not always the cheapest method of communicating, as with post-pay packages it is widely used, in part because student users *perceive* it to be lower in cost and/or that it is a cost that they can easily measure (for further discussion of this see section 7.4.6 below).

Some student users appear to be uninformed as to how they could save money by strategy. They do not research talkplans or pay attention to how long their calls are, when and whom they are phoning:

> "I can check how long my [mobile] calls are, but I don't bother. I just sit and talk. I think the majority of my calls lasts about an hour" – Joshua.

It should not be assumed, therefore, that because most undergraduates have a limited income (see Chapter 6) they are sensible with their money, particularly in terms of mobile phone use. As most of them have not been responsible for landline payments previous to attending University, they tend to have little knowledge about how much (mobile) phoning can cost, and have to learn about this in the same way as they do with regard to heating and food bills. Although the majority of student users gain knowledge over time regarding the various expenses of certain networks, not all do so.

As well as more mobile phones being owned by students in the earlier stages of their degree, more calls are likely to be made by individuals in these years, as Figure 7.14 below shows:

| | **Mean # calls per week** | **Standard deviation** |
|---|---|---|
| **1st years** | 17.36 | 18.07 |
| **2nd years** | 14.78 | 13.64 |
| **3rd years +** | 13.83 | 15.80 |

Figure 7.14: Mean Number Of Phone Calls Made In The Previous Week By Students In Different Years Of Study (P = .042; ANOVA test applied).

This is possibly explained by the fact that the more individuals own mobile phones, the more they are operating within a context where it is expected to make mobile phone calls, and thus they make more calls. Again, however, it seems to suggest something about life at the University that makes it increasingly important/necessary for new undergraduates to purchase and use mobiles. Qualitative data highlights the role of mobile phone use in getting to know people during Freshers' Conference and the first weeks of term:

> "A lot of people I met at the beginning who I'm still very good friends with do Combined Studies. So in Freshers Week, you saw them in meetings, and happened that maybe one of them knew someone that I'd met on my corridor, so got chatting to them again, and we'd swap numbers, 'let's go to supper together' if they're from the same block" – Francesca.

> "Going to Uni as well, you knew that you were gonna meet loads of new people and stuff, and the easiest way to make friends is to say 'Oh, shall I get your number then?' Cos like I did that so much – I had so many numbers when I was going through it transferring them, and some of them, I was just thinking 'Who the hell are they?' I was like, 'Oh, it must be somebody I met when I first went to Uni and stuff. And you just– like, make really good friends, like,

just by getting numbers and giving people a ring, being brave and asking them if they want to meet up and stuff' – Lucie.

Chapter 8 will suggest that it is the high applicability of mobile phones to undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle, combined with the closer integration of students with society in general, that has increased the popularity of mobile telephony for subsequent generations. This is partly illustrated by the differences in mobile phone use between local students and those who have 'gone away' to Newcastle to study. Although they do not usually live away from home, students who reside locally also possess mobile phones; there is no significant difference in ownership levels between local and non-local students:

> "Everybody else has the mobile when you come through here, and plus because I'm travelling through here as well...it's just the way everybody else does it, I suppose, you're surrounded by it" – Michelle.

Mobile use for local students may be popular due to calls made to parents to keep them informed via travel and meal arrangements, and calls made to local and University friends. For example, on 4 December 2000, Michelle, a local student, was in the Psychology Department at Newcastle, and sent a text message to her brother's mobile to inform him that there was a Computer Fair on that day at the University of Northumbria (he texted her back to let her know that he already knew about the Fair but had decided not to go). On 5 December she made a 2 to 3 minute call to her boyfriend to see if he could pick her up from the Bus Station when she returned to her local area of residence. Despite the general popularity of mobiles, local student users are likely to make fewer calls and spend less money on them. These findings are not statistically significant, but qualitative data confirms a contrast in lifestyle between local and non-local students, who have different needs and behaviours that can be related to the way mobile phones are used.

There are other reasons that may influence the number, duration and timing of mobile calls amongst the undergraduate population. The amount of money spent on calls correlates with relationship status, as Figure 7.15 overleaf shows:

| | Mean amount spent | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Single** | £16.90 | £20.02 |
| **Married/cohabiting** | £ 9.90 | £14.17 |
| **Partner in Ncl** | £19.88 | £22.20 |
| **Partner outside Ncl** | £24.85 | £33.47 |

Figure 7.15: Mean Amount Of Money Spent On Calls By Relationship Status (P = .003; ANOVA test applied).

Those mobile users in a relationship with someone outside Newcastle also make more calls (although this data is not statistically significant). Combined with the amount of money spent, and qualitative data stressing the importance, frequency and duration of phone calls within long distance relationships, such data is important:

"[I ring him] first thing in the morning, then…he rings me during the day…and then I'll ring him at 7 [pm], then again later in the night, and then he'll ring me just before he goes to bed" - Kirsty

"Normally, we phone half and half, he phones me, I phone him, but normally we ring each other 2 or 3 times a day…He'll phone me when he gets in, and then I'll speak to him a bit later after we've done some work [he's a teacher], and then if I go out at night, I do stupid things like phone him when I get back!" – Samantha.

"Probably about 4 times a day. That will be during the day, a couple of minutes here and there, just to ask something or whatever…And then the main conversation will be in the evening, in the free minutes" – Phillippa.

Student users with partners outside Newcastle upon Tyne speak of making a high number of calls, including those of long duration, to a partner who lives elsewhere, via both fixed and mobile phones. Phillippa was producing call costs of between £150 and £200 a month on her Vodafone package when she participated in the survey:

> "I can tell you why that was. My boyfriend's in Bristol, and he is, was, Cellnet at the time. So it was unavoidable calls that were just building up and up and that's – now, my last bill was £60, I've got it down a lot. But still, that was good, £60; it still averages about £100. But he's changed to Vodafone, so that's why that's gone down."

Jessica's calls to her boyfriend made her initial mobile bills expensive:

> "The first bill I got, I was like, 'Oh my God!' It was, like, £60 or something, which for me was an awful lot. It just felt like free calls or something, I don't know why...But then the first bill was a real shock, so I pared it down to £50, £40, finally it got to about £30 per bill. And...we'd talk to each other every day, but it was a five minute limit. And I didn't really use it to call anyone else."

No male individuals interviewed were involved with a partner external to the University context; 71.5% of the sample in long distance relationships are female (P = .000). The male author of an article for the student newspaper similarly testifies, however, that:

> "It's no fun dragging yourself across the breadth of Britain, and in some cases further afield than that, every other weekend in the pissing rain. The phone bill will also make you cry" (The Courier, November 2000).

As Chapter 6 suggests, these long distance relationships can be taken very seriously. Kirsty spends lots of time on the phone to her boyfriend as well as writing letters to him on a daily basis. The user diary she completed shows that on 30 November 2000, she received a five minute call on her mobile from her boyfriend at 8.20 am in the morning, 'to say Good Morning and discuss our plans', followed by a 2 minute call from him at 8.45 am, to thank her for a letter. At 1.15 pm, her boyfriend rang her again for a chat whilst she was shopping. At 7.10 pm, Kirsty used her mobile to call her boyfriend at home, and again at 10.25 pm. At 11.05 pm, Kirsty's boyfriend rang her mobile for a 30 minute chat and to say 'Goodnight'.

Those individuals in a relationship with someone in Newcastle, who do not cohabit, also have a high number of calls and monthly spend compared to single people. This can be attributed to needing to make arrangements in the University context:

> "The only reason I phone her is if I need to meet up, or ask what she's doing. Or tell her to hurry up because the taxi's waiting...If she goes away for the weekend I'll ring her. More than anyone else really. Not long calls" - James

Student mobile users who live with a partner are less likely to phone each other by mobile, which would correspond with the behaviour of such couples who spend most of their time together, and thus do not need to make so many arrangement or chat calls.

Mobile phones also play a part in helping establish relationships or less serious liaisons – it is easy for interested parties to swap mobile numbers and to phone each other, or to find out whether the target of one's affections is going to be at the same party:

> "Like, if you've been out, and people have got this guy's phone number, and if it's a mobile number, you always think 'I'll send them a text message, cos if they don't wanna reply, I don't feel stupid, but if you phone them, they're like 'oh, who're you??' you feel really stupid, but if you text them, and they just don't reply, that's OK" – Imogen.

Having a portable, private handset can also allow intimate conversations to be held between two people without other people overhearing.

### 7.4.3 Mediated Use

Although mobile phones are personal artefacts that are usually kept near to an individual, they possess characteristics that enable them to be either switched off or on to a 'silent'[10] mode, whereby text and voicemail[11] messages can be received without disturbing others. Student users switch their phones off and to 'silent' in a variety of places, particularly in University libraries and lectures, as well as public arenas such as cinemas and theatres; they can be observed performing this action on entry to, exit from, and within these places.

Despite official rules, convention or the wrath of a member of staff attempting to dissuade student users from having switched mobiles on, this is not always prevented. Despite the existence of notices demanding that mobile phones are switched off in

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[10] This is a common setting on mobile phones; some also come equipped with a vibrating function so a user can be alerted to a call or text by physical movement rather than a ring.

[11] Voicemail is an answering service provided by the mobile phone.

teaching and study areas at the University of Newcastle (see for example figure 7.16 below), many student users prefer to use the silent mode instead.


Figure 7.16: Signs At The Entrance Of The Robinson Library, 1999.

As there is little official enforcement of the prohibition of mobile use (for example a fine, or exclusion from the library), this behaviour persists and includes individuals speaking into phones when seated at library tables, on staircases and in the toilets. If participating in an activity such as watching a film, individuals are unlikely to use their mobiles, but on campus in traditionally 'quiet' spaces, it is common for student users to discreetly use their mobiles without any loud electronic 'beeps' or rings being emitted. These behaviours belong to an informal set of social rules learned by students over time, which are, in part, mediated by their own attitudes:

> "I must admit that I do text message whilst in the library, but that's a silent thing" – Rebecca.
>
> "You do get a lot of phones going off in lectures. And mainly, it's because people phone in from the lecture to see if their phone's switched on – it's not normally someone from outside! [laughs]" – Imogen.

This behaviour can annoy others and does not promote the mobile phone as having a good reputation; it is something about which both mobile non-owners and non-owners complain. The attitudes of individuals are not, however, consistent, as shown in section 7.5 below.

### 7.4.4 The co-presence of mobile phones

One of the major advantages of mobile telephony for the undergraduate users studied is not so much its mobility but its portability, and the fact that it provides a personal communications system that resides on, or near, the person. Using the mobile in transit is useful, but for the population studied it is the ability to use a private phone in a variety of places that is of major import; a phone that can be constantly co-present and does not need to be journeyed to. Mobile users can hold conversations in private or public domains on campus, in their places of residence and within city spaces, via a handset connected to a network via wireless means. They can frequently be observed using their mobiles in these areas. The mobile is something carried around on one's person, or close to one's person in a bag or coat pocket. Thus mobile phones remain away from one's person only rarely:

> "I've actually started taking it pretty much everywhere now. If I go out without it then I won't get worried or anything, but it does come in handy at times" – Alex.

Despite the emphasis on display observed amongst teen users (Ling 2000e), student users at Newcastle University are not obvious about attracting attention to their handsets when using them, or displaying them, for example upon a table, when not using them. Some individuals' handsets can be visible when in an exterior pocket, but this is unlikely to be a ploy to 'show off' their phone. Lucie used to keep her mobile 'in the mobile pouch on the front of my bag' but did not buy the bag for this purpose:

> "I had a bag, you know the one with the straps that goes across [makes a diagonal across her chest], and I just used to shove it in the front because like, I'd always know where it was...I just threw my bag down, it'd stay in there and I'd know where it was...I liked the bag! And discovered it had this little mobile pocket on the front, so I thought...and I got told off [by friends] so much last year, they were going, 'Lucie, that looks so sad, take it out the front' and I said 'Yes, but it's easier to get to!'"

(For an example of the type of bag described, refer to Figure 7.17 overleaf.)

In Lucie's case, ostentatious display of the phone is actually mediated by others who respond to it negatively. Standing out from the crowd is not perceived as acceptable.

Mobiles are usually only visible if actually being used for a purpose – a call, a text, a game, a calculator – or if one is expecting them to be used. 91.9% of owners say that when they are not using it, they keep their phone 'in a bag or pocket where it cannot be seen'; 3.1% have it displayed on their person, for example in a visible pocket such as Lucie's; and the remaining 5.0% keep it 'somewhere else', which is likely to be in a mobile phone charger when in the home. (Mobiles can require charging on a daily basis if they have been in frequent use. Chargers tend to be kept in student bedrooms, although one household had a Nokia charger in their lounge for communal usage.) Given the co-presence of the mobile, its usage in student residences can provide great advantage to the undergraduate population. Whether equipped with shared phones in Halls or in private accommodation, the provision of a personal handset allows undergraduates to communicate privately at all times without having to wait for the line to be free, and without any disagreement regarding how much they and others owe









Figure 7.17: Person Wearing Bag With 'Mobile Phone Pouch', and A Selection of Mobile Phones Belonging To Individuals In The Study

towards call payment. In contrast to the more usual usage of mobile telephony in UK society – i.e. in transit *between* households and offices, but not so much within them – use of mobile phones is common within student homes. The 6.2% of student users who rely solely on a mobile phone correlates with figures for the entire UK population (Oftel 2002), but the figure of almost 39% of individuals using a mobile as their main phone, when having access to both in the home, far exceeds the 8% within the total UK population.

The importance of using mobile phones in student houses can be complicated if a network signal is inadequate in these areas. Alex has access to a mobile phone only in Richardson Road flats, but has to keep his mobile in the living room because that is the only place where he can get a signal. This also affects his phone usage:

> "At the moment I don't use my phone for actual proper conversation – it's arrangements, planning to meet sort of thing. I don't really phone someone up and ask how they're doing, have a long conversation about it. Because otherwise it pisses me off. I've got to go outside if I want to use the phone. You can't get a decent signal here, so you stand outside in the cold…Paul, the last time I tried to talk to him, I was on my mobile he was on his, and we couldn't get a decent reception to have a proper conversation so I gave up and sent him a text message instead."

Similarly, Kirsty keeps a mobile (her main phone) in a flatmate's bedroom and makes and receives calls there because there is better network reception.

A noteworthy exception to mobiles being co-present is when student users go clubbing:

> "Because you're normally in a big group. Erm, I'd never go home on my own anyway, there's always gonna be...at least one other person there. And, erm, I don't know, just that – you couldn't hear it, you couldn't talk on it in a club, so what's the point in having it there?" – Rebecca.

> "I don't take it out with me at night-time. That might sound a bit strange. But if I'm going to a club I wouldn't take it…I know I'd just lose it. If I was going somewhere on my own, or if I was in the car, then I would have it. If I was going just to a local pub I'd take it as well. But no for a proper night out…I wouldn't use the phone. It'd be too loud. I wouldn't want to phone anyone. I'm

normally in a fairly big group and we all stick together. So we'd probably get a taxi there, taxi back" – Samantha.

There is perceived to be an increased risk of losing a handset or having it stolen in a club, combined with the problem – for women, at least – of where to store it (it is usual for male student users to carry mobiles in their pockets and for female student users to carry mobiles in their bags).

### 7.4.5 Expected and current mobile phone usage

| | Expected | Current |
|---|---|---|
| **To stay in contact with my family** | 80.6% | 79.6% |
| **For safety reasons or emergencies** | 81.3% | 61.8% |
| **To make social arrangements with University friends** | 57.0% | 77.4% |
| **To chat to University friends** | 28.2% | 43.5% |
| **To make social arrangements with other friends** | 58.1% | 73.5% |
| **To chat to other friends** | 47.9% | 62.7% |
| **For job or caring responsibilities** | 14.6% | 16.7% |
| **Voicemail** | 28.1% | 39.2% |
| **Text messages (SMS)** | 52.1% | 80.5% |
| **Creating pictures** | 3.6% | 3.2% |
| **Playing games** | 5.5% | 14.7% |
| **Sending email or faxes** | 1.7% | 4.5% |

Figure 7.18: Expected And Current Usage Of Mobile Phones By The Population Studied.

Figure 7.18 above contains large amounts of information regarding the expected and current uses of mobile phones – i.e. for what purposes student users bought their phones, and for what purposes they currently use them. The table demonstrates several discrepancies between expected and current usage that are further discussed in this section.

The most popular reason for procuring a mobile phone was safety or emergency reasons at 81.3%, although such reasons are currently not as important. Although, as might have been expected, parents rarely suggest that their offspring should buy a mobile when going to University because of such reasons, students have been known to emphasise the safety aspects of having a mobile when trying to persuade their parents to buy them one as a gift. The decreasing importance of safety and emergency use for students over time fits the pattern, observed during the research, of student users buying phones for a specified reason or reasons, and later expanding their usage into other areas that become more important over time, such as contacting family, making social arrangements, and texting:

> "Oh yeah, I'm using it a lot more than I ever thought – and promised myself – that I would [laughs]...but I think...everybody who...has one said to themselves 'Oh no, I've gotta use it for emergency situations and blah-de-blah', but when it's there it's there, it's in your bag, you're like, yeah, OK, I'll use it, might as well" – Rebecca.

Emergency and safety usage does remain important, with a figure of 61.8%, yet it is largely preventative, with student users rarely experiencing real emergency situations but feeling more comfortable driving or walking alone in Newcastle by virtue of having a mobile phone; it acts as a 'safety net' or 'security blanket':

"It's nice when you're a girl out, kind of thing, a bit of reassurance to have a phone with you, that you're not gonna be stuck anywhere" – Abigail.

"Barbie and I were walking up to the Dental School the other day, and there was some really strange guy practically walking in our pockets...so she rang [her boyfriends] and was just like, 'Oh, you're there? Oh, you're waiting for us? Oh, that's great!' – talking to the answer phone. But you do feel safer when you can ring someone, you just do. It does make you feel more safe when you've got it out with you" - Lucie.

Understandably, coinciding with a rapid increase of mobile phone theft in urban areas in England during the research period, student users are also concerned that owning a mobile phone may increase their chances of being a target of crime. Mobile phone thefts have occurred within the population studied; these can be of particular concern if students have not insured their mobiles against theft in an attempt to save money, as is often the case.

Female student users find the safety aspect of a mobile phone more important than male student users, with 70.7% currently using their mobile for these purposes. A higher number of females than males may therefore be concerned about personal safety; the existing behaviours of female students when in transit also suggest that there is indeed a need for increased safety measures. Although Newcastle University runs a subsidised minibus service home to transport students to the door of their home, it remains common for women to cycle or walk home alone from the University or another city centre location after dark. Individuals may carry a personal alarm and/or mobile phone, but do not take further measures regarding personal safety such as travelling in groups. Owning a mobile phone may therefore be seen as safety 'insurance', but it may also encourage complacency. 93.0% expected that their mobiles would be used for safety or emergencies, whereas 70.7% currently use them for these purposes. This suggests that either the need for carrying a phone for these reasons has diminished (perhaps in contrast to other needs that have increased), or that women are not convinced of the efficacy of a mobile phone in dealing with such unsafe or emergency situations.

The most popular type of mobile phone usage referred to by student users is currently text messaging at 80.5%. As with the UK population as a whole, the merits of text messaging were not initially recognised, with a lower figure of 52.1% of undergraduate users stating SMS as a reason for purchasing their phone. The various advantages of SMS have seen its popularity rapidly increase in both populations, however, as is further discussed in the extended section on text messaging below.

Being in contact with family was expected to be, and remains, an important part of mobile phone use with 80.6% expecting to use their mobile for this purpose, and 79.6% actually doing so. This helps demonstrate that despite having left the parental home for another place of residence, using a personal phone to regularly speak with parents is an important part of student life. Regular contact exists between most

families and can range from emotional support to passing on a recipe. Students tend to remain reliant on parents to a varying extent for financial and administrative assistance – paying bills, issuing allowances, forwarding mail from the home address – and this type of subject matter is often the instigator of calls made from, or made to the student via their mobile. It is rare, however, that this type of call would occur without some form of social chat within the call.

Keeping in touch with parents on a social and emotional basis is the most important reason for students to contact family at home, or to be contacted by them. Family ties remain paramount for most students living away from home at Newcastle University, as Chapter 6 has demonstrated. Despite the busy nature of student life, parental influence is still highly visible and important to undergraduates. Regularly communicating with them by mobile phone is becoming an increasingly integral and 'taken for granted' part of student life at the University. The ability to view phone communication in this way, coming not long after an era when students relied on letters and the occasional call via a payphone to communicate with family, has occurred rapidly. Contemporary undergraduates can benefit from more frequent and regular speech communication with their families than those in previous generations. From the point of view of the student users concerned, it makes communication with parents much easier:

> "It's good in a way...because it puts less tension on my relationship. Because when I didn't have my mobile phone, my Dad was constantly trying to get hold of me. And to be honest, I'm rarely at the flat. Even some evenings I'm round at friends or I'm working...in the [Architectural] Studio, in the Department. And it just puts tension on the relationship" – Michael.

Such a change in communicative behaviour obviously has implications, but these are as yet undefined. Increased phone communication may lead to 'better', closer relationships between families, or it may be encouraging a reliance on parental support and advice during the post-18 period that was previously unavailable, and is thus altering the transition to independence traditionally experienced during the university stage. Joshua, for example, rarely rings his Mum or siblings or returns to live with them during the holidays, and thus reflects on his family relationship as 'dysfunctional'. James, by contrast, perceives frequent contact with the parental unit unhealthy:

> "I actually quite enjoy being away from my parents...I have friends who ring their Mum every day, I had a girlfriend used to ring her Mum every day, and I was: 'Why? Why do you need to do that?' But that's the sort of relationship they have. I have a relationship with my family that [is] very close, we will argue a lot and fight a lot, but I see that as healthy. I speak to my parents...about once a week, at the weekend or something."

Although, as demonstrated above, call frequency is linked to call duration and varies between students, the amount of time spent conversing with parents is, overall, large, and calls can be of a lengthy duration for those undergraduates living away from home. Some students ring their parents every day for 5 minutes; others ring them once a week for up to an hour. Many students do chat with a male parent, but the calls of longest duration tend to take place between mothers and their offspring. Students state that they have good 'chat' conversations with fathers, particularly for instance to their work phone or mobile, but when ringing home mothers tend to dominate possession of the line. This concurs with existing research on telephony discussed in Chapter 2 which perceives women as caretakers of the domestic phone within a family household:

> "My Mum could natter to save Europe. Probably half an hour or more...I'd probably chat to my brother about how school's going. And chat to my Dad about work, cos we've now got a common thing to talk about, him being into computers, and me. And then I chat to my Mum and she fills me in on family rantings, and God knows what! You know what Mums are like" – Jack.

Whilst student users do engage in cost-cutting strategies during chat calls to family, having a mobile enables them to both ring the family home, and for members of the family to contact them, regardless of location or time of day. This can be of particular benefit when wanting to make an information call immediately, for example in an area where there is no – or inadequate- wired phone provision:

> "Hello Mum, where are you? It's sunny up here. I was going to ask you for Alex's address. OK. See you then" - Male undergraduate in front of the Union Building.

Students tend to use email more than telephony to keep in touch with their siblings, but most students appeared to have good communicative relationships with their brothers and sisters.

Making social arrangements with friends is another use that many individuals did not think they would employ when buying their mobile phone, but whose popularity subsequently increased, perhaps encouraged by the behaviours of others or other reasons within the University context. The number of student users using their mobile to make social arrangements with University friends increased over time from 57.0% to 77.4%, and to make social arrangements with non-University friends from 58.1% to 73.5%. Mobile phones are exceptionally useful when making or changing arrangements - particularly those of a spontaneous nature - amongst a population who move from location to location at different times, and are often in transit:

> "I would have found it very difficult to meet everyone, cos plans are always changing over time. It's easier if you can tell people you're not going to be there or if you're going to be 5 minutes late or whatever" – Raf.

Despite their brevity, calls to locate, arrange and exchange information with University friends are becoming crucial to student life:

> "Usually, we'll decide – a few of us, when we're together – we'll decide we're going out. And then [we] say 'You phone these people, I'll phone these people, tell them to phone these people.' And just do it that way" – Amy.

> "I normally use my mobile to make arrangements, and often it's people who aren't usually at home. So if you're in Uni and you want to meet them for something, just have something to eat, often you need their mobile" – Alex.

> "We'd phone around people, definitely, and there'd always be someone we forget to ring [laughs]. Although they always phone up, because they always know somebody who's coming!" – Raf.

This is particularly important when making (usually spontaneous) arrangements to meet on the University site:

> "A lot of them are just, like, quick calls to arrange to meet people say at the Union or something" – Samantha.

> "I'm outside the Union, so shall I wait for you here so we know exactly where we're going?" - Male student (outside the Union).

A low number of student users expected to use their mobile phones for chatting, with 28.2% thinking they would use it to chat to friends at University, and 47.9% expecting

to use mobiles for chatting with other friends. As with making social arrangements, a marked difference is noticed between this and current use, which finds chatting to University friends popular amongst 43.5% of users, and chatting to other friends popular amongst 62.7% of users. The difference between uses associated with wired and wireless phones decreases over time. A substantial number of mobile owners use their phones to engage in social chat within the University context, taking advantage of the immediacy, portability and privacy that the mobile phone engenders:

> "They'd like, they'd ring someone up and go 'Ha! Do you know what happened last night?', or they'd send a [text] message saying – 'MAJOR GOSSIP!! Guess what happened to Lucie last night?', kind of thing. Or I'll send somebody a message saying, 'Guess what Penny did last night?' I've had messages like that recently, saying, 'You'll never guess what Penny's up to!' And then I'll have got this message and I'll ring somebody else up and say, 'Guess what happened to Penny?!', and they'll ring somebody else and it just spreads really quickly, but it's because of mobiles" - Lucie.

It is quite common to overhear students not only making arrangements to meet in another part of the University, but also relating tales of their activities the previous night.

It is also interesting to note that significantly more men than women expected to chat to friends, currently chat to friends and currently use a mobile to chat to family. This presents another subtle difference in the way genders approach mobile use (although not necessarily phone use *per se*) differently. It is possible that this higher level of social communication via the mobile accounts for the higher number of calls men make per week. It has also been observed that, in contrast to their stereotyped fixed line behaviour, men enjoy regularly chatting on the mobile.

> "It's weird, because actually on mobiles men tend to be more chatty than they are on landlines…You see guys walking along chatting, but on the landline, it's always 'Yep. Yep. Ok. Yep.' And that's it!" – Imogen.

There may be something about using a mobile phone which makes student males more enthusiastic users than of wired phones; this was not investigated further, but provides additional scope for further research.

16.4% of mobile users utilise their phones for job or caring responsibilities; for most student users this is likely to mean for making arrangements for a part-time job during termtime, and/or for a job during the holiday period:

> "I need my phone a lot as well for things like jobs. I couldn't have the job I was doing if I didn't have a mobile phone, because I was just called 2 minutes before going into a lecture, saying whether I wanted this job or not. If I'd have missed it, they probably would have phoned someone else" – Raf.

Another reason for using a mobile, which was not anticipated by the questionnaire, emerged from the qualitative data - study purposes. During Imogen's interview, for example, she received a text message from a colleague wanting to know 'Do we have a lecture at 1pm, and where's the 2pm lecture?' The varied and changing nature of student schedules makes the mobile particularly useful in quickly finding out about the timing, location and subject of lectures and seminars, as well as arranging to work together:

> "And for work in a way, because say I forgot my timetable and everybody else is asleep, normally I'll just wake them up, but if I was in the house on my own or something, then I'll ring a friend. Or, cos nobody in here is in my seminar group, so I can ring somebody up who is and say 'What's going on tomorrow? and Where's this?'" – Lucie.

Mobiles can also benefit students when they are unable to attend a lecture or seminar, as in the case of Samantha:

> "If I was, say, not going to a lecture or something, I'd text message my friend and say, 'can you pick up the handout for me?'"

Samantha's user diary shows that after having spent time with her family and boyfriend in a home location, she received a call from a colleague who was ringing "to check the time of seminars for the following day, and to tell me the content of a seminar handout I had forgotten to pick up. An important call as I needed to know what was in the handout I was missing!"

### 7.4.6 Text messaging

Text messaging is, as mentioned above, perceived by many student users as a cheap way of contacting others. To request information, arrange something socially or to pass on gossip the 160-character text message is deemed perfectly suited – it costs in the region of 10p at all times, which is considered cheap, and student users can keep track of exactly how much they are spending.

SMS is particularly useful when on the University campus. As mobile phone use is discouraged in areas such as libraries and lectures, spoken communication via phone remains constrained for student users on campus, regardless of whether they possess a mobile. Text messages, however, can be sent and received discreetly whilst the mobile is on the 'silent' setting; student users can thus communicate, even in areas where it is not permitted or felt inappropriate to use a mobile phone:

> "If you're in a lecture you can send a text message, if they've got the volume turned off, if it's silent. You can send a text message to them, and they'll see it flashing on their phone" – Alex.

> "I must admit that I do text message whilst in the library, but that's a silent thing. Say someone else is revising, you'll say, 'Oh, I'm bored, what are you doing?' [and they'll text] 'Oh yeah, I'm bored too, I don't wanna do this anymore.'" – Rebecca.

> "If you've got it on vibrate or on silent, then you can see if you've had any missed calls…generally it's never important, but it might be important, so you can send a message back really quickly saying 'I'm in a lecture, but I'll be out in 10 minutes and I'll come and meet you.'" – Lucie.

Thus mobile phones do not merely provide the means of talking to others in *certain* campus areas, but also the ability to communicate with others via SMS in *all* campus areas (where network signal permits).[12]

SMS is thus also popular because of its role in *locating* other students, particularly on campus during the day. Given the unstructured nature of student life on campus, as

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[12] An exception here is within the Royal Victoria Infirmary and Dental Hospital, where mobiles are required to be turned *off* as opposed to on to a *silent* setting so as not to interfere with equipment.

described in Chapter 6, tracking down friends or colleagues with the purpose of spending time with them is now a popular on campus activity thanks to text messaging. Regardless of whether an individual or the person they wish to communicate with is in a lecture, a library or a shopping centre, SMS allows them to keep in touch with one another. If an individual wishes to arrange lunch, find out about a lecture time, meet a fellow student or simply fill in spare time, text messaging can be operated day or night, on or off campus, directly to someone else's personal phone. The text messaging service provided by mobile phones therefore enables undergraduates to be located by others in a previously non-accessible domain, without specific prior arrangement.

Regardless of the low cost of messages in themselves, the popularity of SMS means that it does contribute to running up larger mobile bills. The use of text messaging has become so widespread and important for students, that it is not uncommon to spend £1 per day sending messages, which is a substantial amount for students on a budget:

> "Text messages cost me a lot. I think that's what builds up my bills, really. If I tend to send say 10 messages a day" – Tom.

Bills build up particularly quickly if one engages in a test message 'conversation' or 'argument' comprising of several messages; student users recognise the irony that simply making a call may therefore have been cheaper:

> "My Mum worked out how many I sent last month; I sent 125 last month, which is just ridiculous. But I find it's really a con, because if someone sends you one and you've got to, if they ask you something, you tend to just reply, whereas it would actually be quicker and cheaper to have a conversation instead of one word answers. Now I'm making a conscious effort not to do so many text messages" – Francesca.

Nevertheless, using SMS during the day rather than calling generally works out cheaper; unlike a text message, it is not always easy to regulate the amount of content and duration of the call during a mobile phone conversation. Rebecca uses SMS "a lot":

> "Cos it's so cheap. It's only 5 – well, it depends who you do it to, but – it's basically only 5 p[ence], and it's just like...general chat like [ ] 'How are you doing?', 'What are you up to?', and then you probably have two or three text messages between each other."

Imogen restricts use of her mobile to SMS at certain times:

> "Text messaging, in the day...cos I normally don't phone in the day, I'll text message, just to say meet me or something. [If I phoned] it would be very expensive!"

Some individuals make further reductions in their mobile spend by sending SMS messages to others – for free - via various websites offering this facility.[13]

Text messaging is also used as a convenient way of contacting someone without having to be 'bothered' (i.e. inconvenienced) to actually *speak* to them:

> "I often text [people], I can't be bothered to ring. To actually talk? Oh God! Text is a lot easier, I use text messages a lot more than I do actual phone calls...It's quicker, and the information's there...all the bullet points" – Tom.

Samantha's user diary shows that she received a text message from a friend, who said he needed to talk to her about something, but was out drinking, so would ring the next day.

### 7.4.7 Adverse aspects

Overall, mobile phones are perceived by the majority of the population studied to provide a large number of benefits, including the ability to communicate regardless of location, and the provision of one's own personal direct line. There are aspects recognised as problematic, however, that, whilst they do not hugely detract from the popularity of mobile phones amongst students, are worthy of mention.

Firstly, the cost of mobile phone calls can be, if not prohibitive, at least problematic, for those on a particularly limited budget. The usage visible within the sample can potentially lead to financial problems, particularly if individuals are unaware of, or unconcerned with, how much they are spending:

> "My bills last year were absolutely horrendous; they were £85 a month...they're not that much anymore! It all went a bit pear shaped, cos I got the wrong end of the stick about the deal...it was 200 minutes, and I thought they were free any time of the day. So obviously I went about calling all the

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[13] See, for example, http://sms.lycos.co.uk/mobile/ or http://www.o2.co.uk/.

time, all these landlines, and it came back and it actually was off-peak…so that was why my bills were so horrendous!" – Kirsty.

"I'd be spending 50 quid a month. I'd put £20 on at the beginning of the month and in a week it'll have gone. And then I'll think OK, I need to have some more money, so I'll put a tenner on it. And then I'll come back one night having been out, and try and send somebody a message, and have no credit left on my phone. So really stupidly top up using my card – another 20 pounds – and it'd all just go really quickly" - Lucie.

Student users also express concerns with being *too* available, unable to have time to themselves because they are expected to always be contactable, always available to socialise (or so they feel):

> "You probably have a better relationship with people who don't have mobiles because you don't meet up with them as often…If you're on a mobile and they ring you up and say, 'What are you doing for lunch? What are you doing here? What are you doing there?'…Too much, yeah. Some people ring you up and you don't want to talk to them. Well, you could just turn your telephone off, but you'd feel it might be important or something. It's just that feeling of – everyone knows where you are and you know where everyone else is at the same time. Before people had their mobiles it was a lot less, because you met who you met on the way, rather than everything was organised"- James.

This seems to be a matter of personal preference, however, as others are quite happy to turn the phone off or 'screen' calls (choose whether or not to answer them):

> "If there's a time when I know I don't want to be disturbed, I'll turn it off. And if there's someone phoning you who you do want to talk to you can always move the call to your answer phone" – Alex.

During the time of the survey, a proportion of mobile users (and non-users) expressed concern regarding the alleged health risks associated with mobile telephony use, as reported by the UK media at this time. 73.6% of the mobile users responding to the survey said they were worried about the potential effects of using a mobile on their health. During subsequent interviews, however, when media interest had faded, it was rarely referred to as a problematic aspect of mobile use, and as such is not presented as an adverse feature of mobile telephony for students at this time. Students are more

concerned about what they perceived to be the unreasonable expense of running a mobile phone (see section 7.5 below).

### 7.4.8 Conclusion

The above section includes data regarding individuals' usage of mobile phones and the reasons associated with this. It includes the types of calls made by students on their mobiles, and the specifics of why, and how, these calls take place. The different ways mobiles are used are connected to frequency, duration and spend, and a combination of other factors including gender, relationship status and age. The influence of contemporary undergraduate life *per se* at the University of Newcastle is suggested, in Chapter 8, to contribute to mobile phone use (and ownership).

## 7.5 Attitudes to use

In the study individuals were also questioned about their attitudes towards mobile phone use. The main attitudes of students to mobile phones are presented below.

10.5% of all undergraduates returning a survey agreed that mobile phones waste time; 56.1% agreed that they save time. The convenience and immediacy of mobile phones thus seems to outweigh any problems caused by its encouraging extra chatting and texting. 32.6% of all survey respondents, however, agreed that 'Mobile phones are a nuisance', with 23.8% agreeing that 'Most mobile phone users are rude' and 58.0% agreeing that 'Mobile phone users talk too loudly'. Although non-users are more likely to perceive mobiles negatively, a substantial proportion of users feel the same way.

Qualitative data suggests that these attitudes are largely connected to the usage of mobile phones in public places. As referred to above, mobile phone use is prohibited in certain University areas, as it is in some public areas, by rules and convention. Although mobile phone ownership and use is popular amongst the undergraduate population studied, there are still existing perceptions as to what is considered (after Ling 1997) appropriate and inappropriate usage of mobile telephony by oneself and one's peers. 96.3% of all students returning a survey approve of the University's policy of banning mobile phone use in the library, and 51.3% also think that there are other areas at the University where mobile use should be prevented, including lecture halls, seminar rooms, other teaching areas and computer clusters:

> "It's annoying in the library, even if people have it on silent and they're talking, that's annoying. Cos I can't concentrate unless it's quiet" – Kirsty.

52.7% of respondents think mobiles should also be banned in public areas including cinemas, theatres, restaurants, libraries, and places of worship and on public transport:

> "Basically, I think that if you get a phone call you should go somewhere private to answer it. I don't want to be, you know, having something to eat and someone on the next table is talking into their mobile" – Alex.

What is seen as inappropriate usage, however, differs widely according to individual interpretation. Some students ignore use restrictions wherever possible. Other students, including mobile users themselves, have a problem with mobiles co-existing in areas that they have traditionally been physically or ideologically 'private' or free from such an intrusion:

> "It's just so rude! Why should you have to – it's other people's noise and their space, so why should you...I don't know. It's just – telephone conversations aren't the same as a personal conversation, especially if it's always ringing or beeping. And if you're on a train and you want to sleep or you're concentrating"- Jodie.

> "They irritate me. Cos people have their phones in the pubs, and around me they start talking. If they had a vibrator on their phone...it's not so much people's phones ringing, it's - well it really annoys me in lectures. But, not so much the ring as when they start answering it and they start shouting. It's like, I **hate** having to speak to other people on the phone when somebody else is in the room. Because it's – it's a private conversation, you know" – Joshua.

Attitudes to mobile use in areas of the University is related to average monthly spend - the higher the bill, the more likely the user is to disapprove of mobile use being prohibited in certain areas. It would seem that non-approval is associated with usage in these spaces, and thus higher bills. Data also demonstrates that although widely used on campus, students nevertheless have different attitudes to the specific ways in which mobiles phones are – or should be – used. Some people find it rude that others have their phone switched off; some find it rude if it is switched to silent mode; others if it is switched on:

"I had this conversation with Jeremy, and he was like, "If you don't want to speak to somebody, you can just turn it off." But then – cos he phones [our mutual friend] Hannah quite a lot, cos they're on the same network, and he gets free calls – if ever her phone is switched off, he gets so pissed off with her. He's like "Why is your phone switched off? Why don't you want to speak to me?" He'll text message her"- Amy.

"I have got a silent mode, yeah. I usually just switch it off, cos I think it's really annoying if someone's ringing and it's just ringing and ringing cos they don't know that it's silent" – Michelle.

"And I think phone calls, very few people are going to call late at night. But boyfriend/girlfriend mainly. And I used to get very angry when he turned his off late at night. Because I thought, if I wanted to get through to you – and that was a bit of an argument we had. Because I was quite possessive of him. It did cause arguments" – Jessica.

"I hate it going off in restaurants. It would really embarrass me if my phone went off in a restaurant. Other peoples' going off and people talking really loudly! – I mean, fair enough if you're in McDonalds, but if I'm in a restaurant I'll be with somebody  want to be with anyway, so I know they're not gonna ring me, so I think it's really rude having your phone turned on" – Kirsty.

It is also common for individuals' attitudes towards mobile phones to change over time, as they become accustomed to the new mode of communication and its usage in new areas.

Mobile phone ownership, call frequency and spend is related to income, as demonstrated above. Presuming that the higher one's income the more likely one is to belong to certain social classes, the linkage made between student mobile use and the concept of class on campus, as introduced in Chapter 6, becomes easier to comprehend. Those from privileged backgrounds, termed *Sloanes* or *Rahs*, can be perceived as being self-absorbed, lacking in self-consciousness, ignorant about the value of money and the feelings of others. Their usage of mobile phones is also perceived to occur along these same lines:

> "It's a Sloane thing. Again, I'm making generalisations, but they just – I don't think they have a clue that people all around them are working…the library for

a lot of people is to socialise...There's always someone coming up and saying 'Hi!' to them, and they might talk about work, but a lot of the time they don't. It's just one of my pet hates, Sloanes. I don't think they're very considerate" – Jessica.

"It's not totally the voice. It's the way they walk round, with their phones...there's just something!" - Imogen.

Criticisms of mobile use related to class background include the loud and persistent usage of mobile phones, in areas deemed inappropriate, without any respect for offending other people. It is possible that the negative connotations of certain backgrounds provide increased resistance to the usage of mobile phones in new and inappropriate areas; or that the class-related discourse at Newcastle University provides a convenient 'scapegoat' onto which individuals can transfer their fear or anger about this and other aspects of mobile phones – such as their alleged health risks.

## 7.6 Summary of Findings

The data contained within this chapter emphasises the popularity of mobile telephony amongst the contemporary student population. Mobile phones have been shown to be enthusiastically adopted and used in a variety of situations by many of the individuals studied. The majority of the Newcastle University undergraduate population studied own mobile phones, with age, year of study and income shown to be significant in influencing ownership levels. Being in a relationship, having limited access to wired telephony and being enrolled on a certain course can also influence the decision to acquire a mobile phone. Mobiles are so important to the population concerned that, unlike teens, Newcastle undergraduates are not overly concerned with handset aesthetics.

The importance of having a mobile phone is seen to become greater once one has acquired a mobile phone. Expected uses for mobile phones contrast with current uses, with student users buying mobiles for practical reasons such as emergencies and arrangement making, and extending their use to chatting and texting over time. Even without reference to the wider ethnographic context, certain aspects of contemporary undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle, as well as the behaviours of the UK

population as a whole, thus seem to encourage mobile phone adoption and use amongst the individuals studied.

Mobile phones are used strategically by many undergraduates in order to minimise communication costs. How calls are made can be dependent on which network is being called; access to wired telephony; time of day; and location. Frequency, duration and cost of calls is also subject to influence by one's relationship status, gender, and whether or not one has moved away from home to attend University. Although other methods of communication such as email, letter writing and wired phone communication continue to be used by the individuals studied, mobile telephony is quickly becoming the primary means of communication over space and time at the University of Newcastle.

For the undergraduate population at the University, mobile telephony has an important role to play in social chatting, information exchange and making arrangements. It enables students to engage in speech communication, conveniently and regardless of location, with family, intimate partners, friends in a home location and friends in the University context. Undergraduates are able to communicate using a personal phone in their place of residence, on campus and elsewhere, using speech and/or text communication on their mobile phones. Communicating at inappropriate times or in inappropriate spaces is made possible by the provision of the 'silent' mode.

Arranging to copy lecture notes or participate in group work is made easier due to mobile telephony, as is communicating with an employer or potential employer regarding a part-time job. An increase in phone communication amongst the population studied is occurring, not only in areas where using phones was previously difficult, such as the University campus and accommodation, but also in private student houses where fixed lines have traditionally been used. The recent popularity of mobile telephony enables students to practice the communication behaviours they now associate with family and friends at home more easily. Not only does it allow students to ring people outside the University context, it also allows people outside of the University context to contact them whenever and wherever, which has only recently become feasible.

Overall, although they do have their negative aspects, such as a possible contribution to student debt, mobile phones seem to benefit the student population. The

undergraduates studied have a particularly affinity for both using mobile phones and using them in certain ways. The next chapter further relates modes of use and what mobiles mean to the population studied, in terms of the wider context of their daily lives and existing research in the field.

## 7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the main aspects influencing mobile phone ownership and use within the population studied. It reveals that, as with other young persons and the UK population *per se*, mobile phones have recently increased their popularity. It also reveals key aspects that are perceived within the research to be related only to the undergraduate population studied and their behaviours. The uses and behaviours associated with mobile phone use that are considered most relevant and resonant in terms of undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle, are expanded upon in Chapter 8, and combined with the extensive data on student lives within the context of existing approaches to the study of telephony, and young people in the UK.

# Chapter 8 : Students and Mobile Phones - Discussion

## 8.1 Introduction

The resulting mobile telephony data from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne sample is rich and varied. Chapter 7 imparted knowledge about student ways of using and understanding mobile communications including, *inter alia,* their use in communicating with family and friends, organising part-time work and assisting with study. This thesis suggests that when viewed in conjunction with information contained in other chapters regarding past and present student lives, such usage can also be associated with the behaviours and needs of the undergraduate population studied on a deeper level.

This chapter therefore argues that the current popularity of mobile telephony amongst contemporary Newcastle undergraduates is part of a wider process of other changes within the UK university system and student populations such as that of the University of Newcastle. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, there are dominant or core behaviours exhibited by the undergraduate population studied. These are presented below both in relation to external factors such as changes in funding and admissions policy *and* as direct influences upon the way mobile phones have been adopted and used within the Newcastle context. Mobile telephony is shown to support the perpetuation of this core student lifestyle, and to be encouraged by it. The convergence of student and 'youth' tastes and behaviours within UK society, another factor that this thesis suggests has contributed to the role of mobile telephony amongst the individuals studied, is also explored in more detail.

Although the mobile phone is shown to be related to processes of change within both the student population and the wider social context, it must be noted that according to the thesis it is not, as a technology, seen as responsible for these changes as per a deterministic or 'impact' model. As Chapter 3 describes, employing a selection of research methods has allowed a picture of the undergraduate population at Newcastle to be viewed in its contemporary and historical settings. These settings convey elements of change in undergraduate life, particularly within the last decade. Mobile telephony is perceived as possessing an enabling role in many undergraduate lives, but

it is argued that this would not be the case without the accompanying transformations in student life, within the University of Newcastle and the English university system as a whole, during the period studied.

Following careful consideration of all data generated, there are five key findings identified by the thesis. These are:

1. that the availability of mobile telephony within the population studied plays an important role in the **transition to independence** shown to be experienced by the undergraduate population studied;

2. that mobile phone use enables a higher level of **ordering** and organisation within the student population than was previously possible;

3. that mobile phones provide a variety of ways of **communicating** within the University context, that are important to Newcastle undergraduates;

4. that the mobile phone forms an integral part of **student life** in general today, particularly in its dominant form, and has some uses which particularly benefit undergraduates at the University of Newcastle;

5. that this study of mobile telephony within the population has helped reveal and explore the already **changing nature of undergraduate life** at the University of Newcastle, in the context of late twentieth century UK society.

The sections below explore these key areas that have emerged from the results on mobile telephony and consider them in terms of the ethnographic material on the student population contained within the thesis (see Chapter 6). It also discusses these findings in the context of existing research on telephony, students and youth. The chapter will conclude with a summing up of the main findings. An evaluation of the project and suggestions for future research are found in the next and final chapter, Chapter 9.

## 8.2 The Transition to Independence

Although a relatively recent social construction (c.f. Aries 1972), childhood is currently seen in Western society as a specific stage in life. During the 20th century, related stages of 'teenage', 'adolescence' and 'youth' have also become standard social categories, although attempts to comprehend the behaviours and meanings associated

with these stages have been varied in their success. Within the social sciences, young people are specifically identified as a special group, or set of groups, in terms of their social behaviours. The academic study of 'youth', an all-embracing term that can include children, adolescents and university students, is more popular than ever. In relation to technology, young people - specifically 'teens' (Ling 2000a; 2000e) - have not only been earmarked as early adopters, but also as specific types of users.[1] Taylor and Harper, for example, distinguish 'young people' as having different technological interests than adults, and as interacting with artefacts in "novel and inventive ways" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 1). Teenagers' mobile phone usage has been explored in terms of the meanings it generates, and although it is important to maintain "a consistent theoretical concern to show how young people are active agents...in the constructions of the meanings and symbolic forms which make up their cultures" (Wulff 1995: 1), it is also important to reach an understanding of the everyday practices of work, study and leisure that young people undertake. As late adolescents, the social behaviour of students has not yet been fully explored by researchers in relation to study, relationships, consumption or the transition to independence. It has only just begun to be explored in terms of communications technology.

Existing empirical work on telephony, such as that of the COST 248 Workgroup, has a tendency to focus on adult usage of mobiles; young people, as shown above, are marked as a special case. Existing research on young people's use of mobile phones exists, but has tended to focus on the realm of the traditional family household – for example Haddon (1997b) suggests that the mobile phone may have a special role to play for young people, but places his focus on the relations between children and their parents, including issues such as surveillance and control which, as Chapter 7 demonstrates, do not apply to the Newcastle University population. Similarly, 'teen' use of mobile phones is not always taken seriously, with teenage communicative behaviours presented as less valid because they are not adult. This thesis suggests, however, that it is precisely because young people are *not* independent, professional adults that their use of mobile telephony is so important.

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[1] Existing research routinely uses the category 'teens'. What constitutes a 'teen' varies from author to author, but the category usually refers to 13-18 year olds who are enrolled in school or further education

At the University of Newcastle upon Tyne 'going away' to study, usually to live in a communal Hall of Residence during the first year, remains the conventional mode of attending the institution. It echoes a practice that occurs at other English universities and which, particularly for the majority of undergraduates who begin their degree directly after A-levels and/or a gap year, can be viewed as one way of effecting the transition from dependent child to independent adult that is identified by the literature (Jones 1995). As demonstrated in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2.6), 'living out' after Halls is a further stage in the transition to independent living, and also has a role to play in expectations of being a student. Having one's own room in a house with people one has chosen to live with, controlling one's own space and making one's own meals and entertainment, are behaviours specific to both the university student and the young adult renting accommodation outside of the parental home for the first time. Learning to budget and contend with the expense of groceries and cleaning products, fuel bills and rent payment is an existing identifier of adulthood. Within the university context, this takes place at a juncture in a person's life when others around them are simultaneously experiencing similar new experiences. It is thus a supported transition, assisted by the semi-independent living arrangement in student Halls during the first year. Leaving home to attend Newcastle University is thus conceptualised by this thesis as part of this transition to independence which, at an anthropological level, can be taken to represent a stage of *rite de passage* (Van Gennep 1960). Similarly, the shift identified in Chapter 6, from socialising cheaply and often during the first year to being more selective about one's social activities in subsequent years, suggests passage along a trajectory to maturation. This transition forms a focus for this study. (As the University students in the research have attained social 'adulthood' on several levels - voting, driving a car, engaging in sexual behaviour – the concept of *independence* is instead preferred).[2]

Ling (1999a) also follows Van Gennep (1960) in identifying 'structural turning points' within the human life cycle, specifically the period termed 'adolescence'. For Ling, adolescence is seen to constitute a *rite de passage* that is partly negotiated via

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and reside in the parental home. As such, although some of the Newcastle University students are aged 18 and 19, 'teen' and 'student' are clearly two separate categories.

ownership and use of mobile telephony. He suggests that a key identifier of adolescence is "the child's movement from the home of their parent to their eventual role as independent adults" (Ling 1999a: 6). The mobile phone is seen to play a dual role, both enabling and representing 'emancipation' from the parental home. As well as allowing adolescents to make arrangements and speak directly to their social contacts, the mobile phone in this context symbolises increasing independence and assists in the mediation of identity.

This thesis suggests that, similarly, mobile telephony can be viewed as being important for Newcastle University undergraduates during their transition to independence, although in different ways. Ling and Helmersen (2000) conclude that the 'need' of Norwegian adolescents for a mobile phone is greatest during the transitional experience of middle school because the *symbolic currency* of the mobile equips them for new experiences; mobile phone ownership is said to symbolise their inclusion within a peer group, and the type of handset to symbolise personal identity. Taylor and Harper (2001) found that, amongst schoolchildren, mobile telephony allows young people not only to identify within and between each other, but also assists the transition to independence by emphasising peer and friendship groups as distinct from family life. Although mobile phones can also be symbolic for Newcastle undergraduates (see below), it is their practical usage which proves crucial, as is shown in Chapter 7. The population at Newcastle have already moved into student residences usually some way from the parental home; they are already largely responsible for themselves. In terms of finance, study schedules, organising time, communicating with social contacts and engaging in student leisure practices, most Newcastle undergraduates are establishing independence and changing the way they live. This has been an increasingly important factor in 20th century student life, providing a transition which mobile telephony supports and makes easier (though is not responsible for creating).

Further, this transitional period is, by definition, not always straightforward. It can be unsettling, full of change, and contain elements completely at odds with life outside the University. Student socialising behaviours can be contrasted to those of other young adults. The amount and flexibility of leisure time available to students during the

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[2] That the individuals studied can be simultaneously categorised as both 'adult' and 'not yet adult', according to different schema, also emphasises the uncertain and confusing nature of being a student.

working week is larger than they would experience in full-time employment. As Chapter 6 shows, low-cost, late-night socialising throughout the week is as such usually, although not exclusively, the domain of university undergraduates. It not only provides social support and a release from academic study, but also allows students to enjoy an intensive level of socialising not experienced by the rest of society. Occurring during the transitional stage to adulthood, the enactment of such behaviours, combined with other elements (such as excess alcohol consumption, a casual attitude to finance and self-identification as a separate group) are perceived by this thesis as fulfilling the requirements of liminality, prior to re-admission to society, the conferral of a 'graduate' status and following patterns of 'adult' behaviour.

In short, following Turner (1969), student life is viewed by the thesis as a liminal phase. It consists of new behaviours, that need to be learned, and new ways of living that are associated with the student experience. These can be difficult to adapt to and, arguably, mobile telephony can ease this stage of adaptation. Sustaining existing relationships, making and sustaining new ones, contacting people at home for advice and making arrangements are important aspects of the life of (new) undergraduate students at Newcastle - having a mobile phone can make them less complicated (Standen 2001b). As Wyn and White (1997: 96) suggest, "the focus on *independence* assumed to be associated with growing up sometimes obscures the extent to which interdependence is important to young people". University life is a specific case whereby, for example, young people live away from home for 75% of the year but generally return to it at regular intervals. Connecting with family and friends in a home location enables a supported transition to independence rather than a complete break with the home environment. Meyrowitz suggests that (North American) "students today are less anxious about attending a faraway college when home is only a phone call away" (Meyrowitz 1985: 116). Ironically, therefore, the mobile's role in enabling emancipation accompanies the converse role of retaining ties to the parental home.

This dual role is partially connected to the liminal status of undergraduates, who are neither one thing nor another – neither adolescents nor adults, schoolchildren nor graduates, dependent nor independent. Their status and behaviours are ambiguous, lived out in a liminal zone. Chatterton (1999: 125), after Shields' (1991) concept of liminal sites, suggests that "the concept of liminality is useful...to suggest how the student's lifecourse is held in abeyance for a number of years during which there are

moments of intense desires for association, sporadic carnival and sociality". This thesis thus conceptualises student life as an inverted representation of adulthood. Ethnographic data from Chapter 6 revealed that the majority of Newcastle undergraduates, for example, experience intensive midweek socialising until the early hours, and relatively calm weekends. They engage in flexible working schedules, and are rarely directly responsible for their income and other needs. The very pattern of their daily life is viewed, in this sense, as different to the working world expected to be inhabited following graduation.

The theme of independence runs through existing research on mobile phones, with Ling, Haddon and Klamer's pan-European study finding that mobility *per se* provides "more choice, independence and could enhance sociability" (Ling, Haddon and Klamer 1999). Mobile telephony enables Newcastle undergraduates to communicate on their own terms, without being limited to certain areas or certain times. They are also in control of their own finances, and thus their own talkplans. Such behaviours, described in Chapter 7, arguably suggest that the provision of (mobile) telephony for undergraduates (in both student accommodation and on campus) is of greater importance than for other groups within the UK population that have better access to wired telephony, both in their homes and at their place of employment. To conclude, the student experience, as a transitional *rite de passage*, involves the mobile phone as an artefact that both supports and represents student interdependence between the two domains of home and University, and the core behaviours associated with undergraduate life at Newcastle.

Within the liminal context referred to above, which is new and unknown on many levels, making friends and maintaining friendships can be a difficult process. Difficulty levels may increase if methods of communication such as fixed line telephony, previously available and widely used in the family home, are not (easily) available for use in the University context. To compound this situation, sustained contact with family and school friends can be desirable for the student who has physically (and symbolically) moved away from the home unit. Chatting with these people, and arranging face-to-face contact with them, is important to most students throughout the duration of their University career, as is visible in the ethnographic data. Family relationships have been shown here, and elsewhere (McCarthy and Humphrey unpublished), to remain the most important over time for the majority of

undergraduates at the University of Newcastle. Long-distance intimate relationships also benefit from regular non-present communication to help sustain them, in ways that, during termtime, are different to those outside of termtime.

Mobile telephony provides students with an increased sense of the external physical and social world outside of the city of Newcastle and their University lifestyle. Beginning to replace[3] what is perceived as an inadequate communication system in Halls (even by non-users), and assisting with communication in private student housing, mobiles allow students to send and receive calls and texts from friends and family outside of the University domain, as Chapter 7 shows. This enhanced communication system can connect undergraduates to an external support network which can be of extreme importance in terms of a supported transition to independence. It also has consequences, however, in that students can easily chat to these people *from* different spaces (i.e. Hall of Residence, on campus, whilst shopping). Thus, in conjunction with other influences, student life is becoming less like the classical 'ivory tower' image of academia, and more akin to what could be termed a 'Redbrick hub', connected on all sides by telephone extensions to the 'real' world[4] - no longer a separate student enclave.

Traditionally set apart from the rest of society in residential colleges or Halls as part of a university or campus area (see Chapter 5), students have not, historically, experienced high levels of communication with non-university contacts during term-time. Nowadays, however, mobiles allow regular, simple and spontaneous telephone communication to be part of undergraduate life in their first, and arguably crucial, year of study at Newcastle University. Rather than a reliance on letters from home, incoming messages or brief payphone calls, convenient, extensive and direct speech communication via mobile phones can take precedence, as introduced in Chapter 7. Having gone away to University from a home context, in which access to wired phone communication is less limited, mobile telephony not only allows slippage within the home/university dichotomy, but also enables students to communicate in familiar

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[3] Payphone provision in Halls is, ironically, being reduced by the University following a fall in demand - most likely due to students choosing to use mobiles instead.

[4] Interestingly, students can be subject to criticisms such as 'You don't live in the real world/You live in your own little world!' from those who are not students.

ways. The next section continues to explore the role of communication with friends and family in the undergraduate population studied.

## 8.3 Ways of Communicating by Mobile Phone

The importance of the family in late 20th UK society has been subject to debate, particularly in political circles. Social researchers have posited that the concept of family is becoming eroded, with new social groups replacing existing family ties. Research on telephony, however, has concluded that people maintain most social contact within the family 'sphere' (Ling, Haddon and Klamer 1999), and that in recent years wired telephony has maintained an important role in family relationships (Singer 1981: 2). Existing research has studied the role of technology in generating and maintaining 'social networks' (Wellman 1999; Ling 1998). Without meaning to negate this concept, it is apparent, within the student population, that it is difficult to extricate 'social' phone use from other types of phone use. Mobile phones have thus, for the purpose of this thesis, been examined in terms of 'student lives'.

During the period 1999 to 2001, mobile telephony has become increasingly important for communicating with family, as the data regarding student mobile owners at the University of Newcastle in Chapters 6 and 7 shows. Similarly, McNeill and Funston (1999), studying 16-24 year olds in Australia, found that staying in touch with family and friends was a prime motivator for the adoption of mobile telephony. Although the parents of undergraduates at Loughborough University have been found to buy their children mobiles to ensure family⇒student contact (Duhig unpublished: 34), for Newcastle students the mobile's provision of student⇒family contact is the key factor. The mobile phone enables students to maintain relationships with their parents when away from home; it increases, rather than erodes, personal contact with the family. For many of the individuals involved in the research, a close family relationship has become increasingly important over time, suggesting that the relationship between parents and children undergoes adjustment as students become more independent from their parents. Cochran *et al.* challenge those who suggest that personal relations are being eroded in Western urban, industrialised society, emphasising that "communities of mutually supportive individuals are alive and well in modern societies, although they are less visible to the casual observer because they are no longer as geographically bound as they once were" (Cochran *et al.* 1990: xiii). Such comment is reminiscent of

Aronson's 'psychological neighbourhood' enabled by the wired telephone, important in knitting family *and* friendship groups together in the absence of local ties in the immediate vicinity (Aronson 1971: 303). The connection of one's home area, or 'neighbourhood', to the University context remains important in the lives of the undergraduates studied, with mobile telephony increasingly responsible for such a connection.

Fortunati (1997: 1) refers to the increasing isolation of individuals in post-industrial society as responsible for the mobile potentially being "the communicative instrument of the future". If this is so, student life should be noted as isolating in various ways. Living arrangements provide students with one room in which they live, often surrounded by other people who are initially strangers. Travelling to, within and from campus is often conducted on an individual basis, and meeting up with people on and off campus is not always easy to arrange. Students are without "a fixed residence, a safe home with a precise address" (Fortunati 1997: 3), Fortunati's requisite for permanency; the mobile phone thus perfectly suits them.

As well as family relationships, the thesis reveals that many Newcastle undergraduates have important relationships with friends both within and external to the University context. Eldridge and Grinter, studying teenagers' use of mobiles within the UK, observed their "fundamental need to communicate with friends" (Eldridge and Grinter 2001: 1). Ling, Haddon and Klamer (1999: 6) found friendships to be an "important and a source of refreshment and relief" to European technology users. Similarly, for individuals at Newcastle University, friendship can provide not only a means to socialise with others, but a source of emotional support. Mobile calls and texts, in particular, are regularly used for the exchange of greetings, jokes and other non-informative calls. These may help, as Taylor and Harper found for sixth-form students, to "functionally and symbolically cement the durability of social relationships in local communities" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 2). Interestingly, Rakow (1992) and Ling (1999b) distinguish between what they term 'functional' calls and 'social' calls, which seems to imply that social calls are not necessary and have little purpose. This thesis argues that this type of communication should not be viewed as a separate part of mobile phone use, but is instead as important as other functional forms of communication. The dichotomy is certainly not workable within the student context, where both keeping in touch with friends and family outside the university context, and

socialising with those within it, are key aspects of everyday life, as is visible in Chapter 6; it is part of an outdated trend in research that does not yet recognise mobile telephony as commonly used *within* the home (Haddon 1997b). This is partly related to restricted ways of looking at households. Ling (1998), for example, focuses on the role of Norwegian mothers in maintaining social networks, and not only denies the agency of young people but also paints a picture of the family home as the central social hub. Whilst the role of the home is very important in student life, ethnographic data from the University of Newcastle study shows that undergraduates themselves are situated in their own domestic context, from which they operate networks of their own including friends, family, colleagues, peers, employers, and tutors.

Many Newcastle students were found to be employing cost-cutting strategies such as attempting to use SMS rather than speech calls, making calls at off-peak times and rationing the quantity and duration of calls. This echoes cost-cutting strategies employed by other low-income groups in relation to the wired telephone (Haddon 1994). Another specific strategy was that of trying to restrict calls to mobiles on the same network. Churchill and Wakeford's (2002) work on UK teens observes the emergence of 'close' and 'distant' friends due to this practice of network-to-network calling. The effectiveness of this strategy for the undergraduates studied – particularly for students with free calls to those on the same network at off-peak times – means that members of shared houses and/or social groups subscribing to the same network can thus become closer in a communicative, and perhaps emotional, sense.

Moffatt's ethnography of US university students found that "friendly fun was thus the bread and butter of college life as the undergraduates enjoyed it at Rutgers in the 1980s. It consisted almost entirely of spur-of-the-moment pleasure" (Moffatt 1989: 33). For undergraduates at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, the pursuit of leisure and pleasure has also been shown to be paramount for a majority of students, with its often immediate and *ad hoc* nature noted within this research and by Hollands (1995: 45), who categorises student forms of socialising as "somewhat more spontaneous" than the forms of socialising expressed by other young people in the city. The mobile phone thus lends itself well to the less formalised nature of student arrangements in the Newcastle context. Emotional support from peers is partly provided through forms of socialising – meeting with individuals with whom one has something in common, or belonging to a group, for example. Socialising is also

popular in its own right at the University, providing personal enjoyment and entertainment for the population studied. Given that "the more socially active a person is in general, the greater their use of the telephone" (Fielding and Hartley 1987: 113), phone access would seem paramount for Newcastle undergraduates. Both talking on the phone, and going out to have fun, are important aspects for contemporary undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle; both are further enabled, and possibly further enhanced, by the provision of mobile telephony (see section 3.5 for an extended discussion on this topic). Hollands (1995) identifies a 'post-adolescent' phase that revolves around the consumption of leisure – 'going out'. His work suggests that the uncertain nature of early adulthood has led to identity formation via this mode of consumption:

> "These different forms of social interaction expressed in the night time economy, including group drinking rituals, fashion, music and dance and drug cultures are, in essence, modern equivalents of community" (Hollands, 1995: 1).

For the University undergraduates represented in this thesis, regular socialising can thus be perceived as important in not only providing students with a sense of routine and fun, but also of entering into this with other like-minded individuals to form part of a social group. Further, the ways of 'going out' in which students engage are viewed, by Hollands, to be similar regardless of educational background, demonstrating their applicability throughout the contemporary student population.

Personal access to a wired telephone now tends to be usual in the family homes of students. In recent years, 'teenage phone chatting' within a family setting has been identified as a phenomenon (Haddon 1994); teenagers' ownership of (wired) phone handsets, TVs, VCRs and PCs has become more common over time (Haddon 2000). Subsequent generations at Newcastle are therefore more likely to notice a marked gap between the provisions of wired telephony within the family home and the University setting. In the first city in the UK to lay underground phone cables (Robertson 1947), it is perhaps ironic that the University of Newcastle upon Tyne's provision of wired telephony in its Halls and flats is perceived by students as limited at best and is largely deemed inadequate in terms of accessibility and privacy. The desire to communicate with members of social networks within the University setting is thus partly responsible for the popularity of mobile phones. One no longer has to inhabit a study-

bedroom without direct phone access. Duhig's research also found that the unavailability or expense of wired telephony within Halls, coupled with a desire for privacy when communicating, were primary reasons given by Loughborough University undergraduates for purchasing a mobile phone (Duhig unpublished). Similarly, Haddon finds personal use of telephony particularly key for a group of 14 to 17 year olds in Britain, who "are just starting personal, and maybe intimate, relationships with their peers" (Haddon 1998: 37). Although more of an inconvenience than a problem, lack of access to telephony in the University context can be solved for those students who run mobile phones.

When living out in shared private accommodation, as is usual from the second year onwards, Newcastle students can experience problems sharing a phone with others students. This is a common undergraduate complaint (MacFarlane and McPherson 1996). Haddon (1994) also shows that a great deal of conflict can exist around use of the communal domestic phone - the 'blocking' of the phone due to extensive calls, and deciding who is responsible for paying which elements of the bill, has been found to cause arguments. The lack of access to a *personal* phone line is another aspect of student life improved by mobile telephony, as shown in Chapter 7. The portability of all mobile handsets also enables individuals to decide *where* they will make a call within a building, allowing privacy and convenience in indoor settings. For the UK population in general, mobile telephony is perceived as enhancing communication outside of one's place of residence. At the University of Newcastle it is as important, if not more important, *within* this place of residence.

Having a mobile phone is, for many students, more about having access to a personal phone than its mobile nature, with both the convenience and privacy engendered via the mobile phone viewed positively. As well as allowing undergraduates to make calls in new public spaces, as discussed below, mobile telephony is also changing the meaning of private space for student users. Shared incoming wired phones and shared outgoing payphones in University residences, and shared wired phones in private accommodation, are no longer considered adequate for those who can operate a personal communication system via a mobile phone. Returning to the mobile as providing support during the transition to independence, the provision of phone communication in one's personal space is particularly resonant. Data shows that having direct access to adequate phone communication is becoming an expected part

of the lives of Newcastle students living away from home, and mobile telephony, for those who feel they can afford it, is a means of providing this. Compared with previous generations, today's undergraduates at Newcastle have higher expectations regarding phone communication, in part because of the advanced facilities mobile telephony is seen to offer. As such, they are using mobiles extensively within their place of residence. Parallel research on student use of mobiles at the University of Bristol reveals similar results (Krefta unpublished).

The portability of mobile phones is, of course, also useful for undergraduate users outside of their place of residence, during their days on-campus, when they are in transit, and in other areas of the city. Chat and arrangement calls to friends and family are not restricted to the home, or certain times of day. Weilenmann and Larsen's (2002) work on Swedish teenagers' usage of mobile telephony found that 'local social interaction' played a large role, an area which has not previously been taken into account in mobile phone studies. Although phones tend to be used for communication over distance, mobile phones play a part in linking together *local* communities of young people. Amongst the Newcastle undergraduate population, using the mobile to communicate with and to locate one's friends and colleagues is popular. Similarly, arranging meetings with University tutors can be carried out more easily, as student use of internal phone lines on campus remains restricted (there are two internal lines for student use in the foyer of the Union).[5] Within Newcastle University and UK society in general there are certain areas where verbal communication, either face to face or via a mobile phone, is either formally regulated or deemed inappropriate by general consensus. By virtue of mobile telephony, communication can be achieved on campus not only in accepted social areas such as the Union building, but also in study areas such as libraries. This has led to some minor contention regarding mobile phone use on campus but, thanks to extra services provided with mobile telephony such as voicemail, text messaging and the 'silent' mode, communication can be effected discreetly and quietly in areas where noise is seen to be inappropriate.

Attitudes to space and its uses are culturally constructed (Ardener 1981), and technology use draws particular attention to divisions between 'public' and 'private' space (Haddon 1998). The contrast between public and private space has also been

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[5] Student ownership of mobile telephony also enables tutors to contact their tutees more easily.

studied at some length in the context of telephony. Dervin and Shields (1999) speak of the *violation* of privacy effected by calls to the wired home phone amongst American families. Haddon's (1994) in-depth examination of domestic telephony reveals that privacy is also highly valued within the UK, as wired telephony can be perceived as intrusive. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the use of mobile telephony in public spaces has been viewed negatively. Haddon (1997b) comments on the ever-present tensions and problems that accompany the introduction of new ICTs. Although the use of mobiles can be problematic in some spaces at the University, in general mobile use is accepted by the student population - often in contrast to the perplexed notions of lecturing staff, who cannot see why students 'need' to use their mobiles so much (or at all), or why they fail to turn them off in lectures.[6]

The public/private divide and the role of the mobile phone within this is the most explored area within mobile phone studies (possibly because it is a subject popular with the media and the general public). Haddon *et al.* (2001) suggest that the use of payphones and mobiles in public spaces reveals that something private, the phone conversation, has begun to shift into the public arena, thus almost 'privatising' pieces of public space - some people find this change in the use of public space unsettling and perhaps offensive. The mobile phone has thus altered "the boundary between self and others" (Ling, Julsrud and Krogh 1997: 1), and causes "disagreement as to the desired porosity of the barrier and how sanctified the setting should be" (*ibid*: 1). As with the Sony Walkman before it (Du Gay *et al.* 1996), the mobile phone can be seen as portraying an ambiguous role (Fortunati 1997). It is clearly, as Chapter 2 introduces, a *disruptive* technology, in the sense that it alters existing usage of space and produces a range of reactions to its usage, including anger (Haddon 2000).

Differences between the attitudes of inhabitants of different countries in use of mobile phones in various spatial contexts have been noted (Mante 2002: 119). Ling (1997), following Goffman (1971), presents mobile phones as instrumental in understanding what he terms 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behaviour in the contemporary Norwegian context. Anthropology as a discipline has, however, moved away from its

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[6] Roos (2001: 6) suggests that 'certain academic intellectuals' are forming a marginal group that remains resolutely opposed to mobile phone ownership. Kim (2002: 63) makes students in his classes in Korea sing a song in front of everyone if their mobile rings whilst he is lecturing.

original and constrained concept of culture/s as bounded and unchangeable, as presented in Chapter 2. This thesis demonstrates that attitudes towards space can not only differ between countries, but *within* them, as the attitudes of Newcastle University undergraduates help demonstrate; this presents a further reason for focusing on a specific social group and its behaviours.

Within the undergraduate population studied, disruption and inappropriateness are issues related to mobile phone usage, but are largely perceived as being annoying side-effects accompanying the largely positive benefits that mobile telephony enables. Existing research examines the tensions between boundaries, but does not examine the benefits accrued by being able to communicate in public areas. For students on campus at Newcastle University, being able to communicate by phone with others, on campus and outside of it, is an entirely new concept. Thus, although boundaries are being broken down, this does not always have negative connotations. For the individuals studied, the availability of communications in areas where there previously were none is generally welcomed. Although the campus is not directly analogous to a professional workplace, it is the domain where students spend much of their time. Thus, although negotiation has occurred regarding mobile use in public spaces and students view restaurants, cinemas, and places of worship as places where mobiles should be switched off or on to 'silent', having a mobile is still regarded in largely beneficial terms by student mobile users.

Ling *et al.* (1997) invoke the metaphor of the waterproof fabric 'Goretex' in their exploration of the concept of availability and its relation to mobile phones. They found that although people liked to use mobiles to ring *from* certain spaces, they did not enjoy being always available to others ringing *to* the mobile phone in these spaces. The researchers also found, however, that attitudes differed between generations, with the young people in their sample "far more concerned with the connectivity and accessibility provided by mobile phones" (Ling *et al.* 1997: 12) than older generations. Correspondingly, student users at Newcastle do not find increased availability such a problem – they relish being able to be contacted by family and friends, when and where they previously could not. Although the home can be perceived as a 'sanctified' domain, where one privately relaxes, the fact that a personal, private phone connects students to the outside world from the home is perceived positively in general. Newcastle undergraduates previously had difficulty gaining communicative privacy

via a fixed line, so although mobile use does intrude on others' space within certain areas, it allows the user to carve out their own communication area, where previously they had none.

Further, when anger is vented towards mobile use at the University of Newcastle, it is less directed towards its use in spaces previously viewed as public and sociable that have become private – i.e. restaurants, outdoor spaces around campus, the Union – than in those spaces previously viewed as private and studious – i.e. libraries, seminar rooms – that have become public (see section 7.4.3 on 'Mediated Use' in Chapter 7). Bringing mobile use into areas where face to face interaction is permitted and expected is less contentious than the boundary transgression committed when the noise of spoken conversation and/or the bleeps emanated from button pressing occur in areas previously recognised for quiet study. Thus, teaching areas and the library are key spaces that the presence of the mobile phone troubles – and are simultaneously places where one can engage in *silent* communication via services provided by the mobile phone (see discussion of text messaging below).

Roos has suggested that "most of the problems connected with public use of mobile telephones will slowly disappear as people develop functioning rules [and the handsets become more intelligent]" (Roos 2001: 2). Perhaps understandably in an undergraduate population becoming independent, student mobile users have adapted their own ways of mediating usage in these problematic areas. Orders to switch off mobile phones in the Robinson Library, for example, are freely ignored as the 'silent mode' is instead substituted; the Mobile Phone Area provided in an attempt to regulate usage is less popular than using one's mobile outside the library doors, even in cold weather. The population studied has evolved its own rules. In the absence of rules strictly enforced by University staff, left to their own (mobile) devices, Newcastle undergraduates have constructed their own system of policing use via the gaze(s, sighs and comments) of others. Reminiscent of the changes in disciplining persons in history presented by Foucault, student use of mobiles is not subject to punishment, but controlled by the policing of the self (Foucault 1977: 184). Mobile phone use by students emphasises the importance of location in influencing communicative behaviour. As well as being enacted on a physical basis, i.e. being in an area where there is not adequate network reception, use of mobile telephony is often ideological; students react to the *meanings* associated with places such as libraries and restaurants, rather than their location or the

fact that they are enclosed buildings. It is possible, for example, that attitudes to mobile use in certain spaces are generational in nature. Ling's Norwegian sample found it 'impolite' and 'bad manners' that mobiles were used in places such as restaurants, because they had been brought up to believe that private dining time was sacrosanct (Ling 1997). If one does not have this belief in the first place, as is potentially the case with younger generations, there is no boundary to be crossed.

Although students with a higher level of disposable income spend more money on their mobiles, the ways in which mobiles are used remain similar between all undergraduate users. The formation of rules regarding use in certain spaces may, however, be related to class background. The early adoption of mobiles within the Newcastle population may have been a marker of class status, as in UK society *per se*, and this could have contributed to existing attitudes. Negative attitudes towards 'Sloanes' and their alleged tendency to use mobiles loudly and inappropriately regardless of others, suggests that these students have a large part to play in the emergence of a mobile etiquette and mediated usage in certain areas. It is possible that those who use mobiles 'loudly' and 'rudely' where it is deemed inappropriate to do so provide an excellent example to other users of how mobile phones should *not* be used, and thus discourage such behaviours. It is also possible, however, that the noticeable use of mobiles by these students may be establishing a pattern for a future, whereby all student users will use their mobiles in all areas regardless of the attitudes of others. Finally, it is worth considering that the ways this group use mobiles may be exaggerated by those who feel negative towards them on other levels.

The use and meaning of mobile phones has clearly developed, and retained, the power to influence these types of ideological boundaries. Rather than following Goffman as others (Ling 1997; Murtagh 2002) do, however, this thesis draws on the work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) regarding the 'inappropriate' use of mobiles. It suggests that the reason that mobile use produces reactions such as anger is because people consider it out of place in their current environment; they struggle to make sense of the anomalies it produces. Private conversations brought into a public context, electronic noises in quiet spaces, attention turned from face-to-face to handset-to-handset interaction in social situations - this 'matter out of place' conflicts with preconceived ideas of how space should be used, many of which are largely symbolic or personal, rather than grounded in the law. The crossing of symbolic boundaries,

whether physically or vocally, alters the social order and thus makes people uncomfortable (Douglas 1966). Newcastle undergraduates, whether consciously or not, have found alternative ways of using mobile phones to make them less disruptive to others, whilst still retaining their benefits. (Interestingly, students also use mobiles to order other elements of their lives that they find anomalous, as section 8.4 demonstrates.)

These ways of using mobile telephony ensure that mobile phone users can send and receive voice and text messages to their phone without necessarily disturbing others, and have contributed to the mobile's popularity both as communicator and locator, utilised to facilitate face to face meetings and communication. The mobile phone provides a useful means to find out where other people are and what they are doing. The mobile thus allows students to find each other who are on campus or in student residences. Being able to locate someone has implications if students need emotional support from friends, wish to arrange a social outing, or to exchange necessary information.

Palen and Salzman state that "young people can be enthusiastic users of mobile telephony, particularly European teenagers who have embraced text messaging as a special network service" (Palen and Salzman 2002b: 6). Although calling remains very popular with Newcastle University mobile users, they too have a particular affinity for SMS, partly due to its ability to communicate and locate on campus, silently if necessarily. Like sixth form students, who "use SMS to relay text messages back and forth during times when they may not be able to talk aloud" (Alexander 2000: 8), the use of silent SMS is important to Newcastle undergraduates. As with other young people, they also appreciate the perceived cheapness of SMS (Churchill and Wakeford 2002), and its relative quickness and convenience (Eldridge and Grinter 2001). Newcastle undergraduate use of SMS finds several parallels within work of Grinter and Eldridge (2001) who suggest that, for (school age) teens, texting is perceived as 'easier or more convenient' especially in (previously) inappropriate places or at inappropriate times.

Harper sees SMS as a 'new communicative form' that simultaneously harks back to the mode of letter writing (Harper 2002) that, as Chapter 7 shows, still remains a form of communication used by some Newcastle undergraduates, and whose sending and receipt can be redolent with symbolism. As something that does not necessitate an

immediate response, Harper suggests that this is a more likely explanation for the popularity of SMS than the fact that it is perceived as quicker, easier and cheaper. Amongst the Newcastle student population, however, an appreciation of such a lack of pressure is not observed. The mobile short messaging service, although in some ways reminiscent of telegraphy (Cherry 1974), or early telephone use that did not require a reply (Robertson 1947), is integrated within a system of responses for the undergraduate users concerned. Amongst these, the primary uses of SMS are locating other students and 'text message conversations' held in an attempt to cut the cost of communicating by mobile. SMS may not actually be cheaper using this response model, but it enables student to directly measure the cost of communication. Students may have a higher income than their school-age counterparts, but they are nevertheless working to a budget and therefore the ability to better control mobile costs is appreciated. For the individuals concerned, of course, budget is not just about controlling how much money is spent, but how much is spent at certain times – tri-yearly student loans, semi-regular parental contributions and part-time wages necessitate careful financial balancing. The ability to measure mobile costs can free up more student income to spend in other areas (some of which may also be regarded as necessary to undergraduate life at Newcastle, see section 8.4 below).

It is clear that the rapidity, cheapness and convenience of SMS is particularly suited to the Newcastle University context. In other respects, however, there are large differences between teen and undergraduate use of mobiles. Grinter and Eldridge (2001) found that 71% of teen text messaging was done from within the home; for Newcastle students, the integral factor is being on the move, especially within the University campus. Further, school pupils tend to have a clearer idea of when and where they will be in lessons, or when it is inappropriate to disturb the family home of friends. Within the Newcastle University context, individuals are less likely to know what their friends are doing at what time and where. Making calls and using SMS is thus arguably more important for them.

Ling (2000e) links the ownership of mobile phones by Norwegian teens to style and fashion. Research conducted amongst adults in Brighton, UK, suggests that, although mobile users denied their handsets were part of their image, this contrasted with displays of ownership that they observed, particularly by men (University of Sussex Media, Technology and Everyday Life Research Group 1997). Such a discrepancy is

not visible amongst the student population studied; these results would be puzzling if there were not a large variety of *practical* uses to which undergraduates put mobile telephony. Ling suggests that trying to view the mobile telephone in a functional context amongst the teen population causes problems, as ownership and display are the most important constituents. But the Newcastle University data emphasises that, for undergraduate student users, the mobile is more about being a functional, practical tool than a fashion accessory or 'personality kit' (Ling 2000e: 1).

For these undergraduate users the inverse is in fact visible. Focusing on the stylistic aspects of mobile telephony renders its meaning less potent, and moves the discussion away from the elements that are the most important for students. The individuals concerned are self-aware regarding their mobiles, but are more apt to use them, than discuss them in the context of what has been termed 'hyper-coordination' (Ling and Yttri 2002). A discourse surrounding the pros, cons and aesthetics of the mobile phone does exist, but Newcastle undergraduates do not usually possess the attitude that "functionality is only a secondary consideration" (Ling and Yttri 2002: 163) as teens are seen to do. Whilst teens are represented as constantly engaging with the mobile as a consumer product, merging it with their myriad value systems, Newcastle University student users exhibit a different use of the technology, as an organisational and social tool. The mobile phone can be perceived as 'desired' consumer good (Campbell 1987) by undergraduates, but this is ultimately due to its practical role in their lives. Lifestyle is the dominant factor influencing ways in which mobile phones are used, as opposed to age.

In many ways, style and fashion are imperative for the Newcastle population; as Section 6.2.10 in Chapter 6 shows, following the consumption patterns set by one's peers is increasingly popular. But the mobile phone is not for them an artefact through which others should read identity, or which enters into processes constructing elements of youth or teenage subculture (Alexander 2000). Undergraduates have the means to convey self in many other ways. Unlike teens, who, as Alexander (2000: 5) suggests, "may not be as comfortable with more verbal ways of communicating affiliations and interests", social groups at Newcastle University evolve via getting to know others by entering into conversation with them. Undergraduate mobile usage appears to be less self-conscious and less performative than for school-age individuals.

Taylor and Harper's (forthcoming) research on sixth-form students in Cambridge, UK, found their mobile use, particularly SMS, to be filled with symbolic meaning; they ally it to the anthropological concept of gift-giving. The sharing of phones, the gifting of (call) credit, the use of SMS and the discourse surrounding it are identified by the authors as ritualistic elements within a symbolic gift culture. Regardless of the applicability of this theoretical interpretation for teens, amongst Newcastle University students there is no visible comparative practice. This thesis suggests that this is due to differences between the two populations. Taylor and Harper studied 16-19 year olds, the age group closest to that of university students. They concluded that the mobile phone fulfils social needs for the sixth-formers; this occurs in different ways to Newcastle undergraduates. Although both the populations studied are 'young', they have different lifestyles, reflected in and supported by their use of mobiles. Sixth-formers have local relationships to maintain and negotiate on a daily basis via the mobile phone; they tend to live in the family home; and using call credit within a gifting schema is more applicable within their limited financial sphere. Newcastle University students, by contrast, tend to live with some of their friends, or at least invite them round to their own homes to socialise; they prefer having contract talkplans for their phones, which are part of their becoming independent, and thus borrowing credit rarely features.

For Newcastle students, mobiles are recognised as fulfilling several functions, but are less about reaffirming friendships and social groups in the local area than is suggested for teens. Undergraduates have other ways of doing this, just as they have other ways of reaffirming personal identity. The element of the mobile being a novelty, or a toy, something to be played with, passed around and shared, is not evident within the Newcastle population studied. Their relationships are more likely to be played out in non-campus spaces than sitting around a table at (sixth-form) college. They do not have to text partners or close friends goodnight because they can tell them personally, or via a phone call. Although they may lend and borrow money, and be obligated to pay it back, this is not part of a system of gift exchange. Asserting that "much of what young people do with their phones revolves around the exchange of phone content and of the phones themselves" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 14) may be correct in terms of teens, but not with the University students observed. For them, mobile phones are *not* "artefacts through which people express themselves and their relationships with

one another" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 32); rather, they are artefacts through which people contact each other and mediate their relationships. It is therefore possible that the reason "gift giving of this kind has received very little attention" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 6) is because it only exists in the specific domain Taylor and Harper observed.

SMS does have an important role to play at Newcastle, but it does seem much more allied to Grinter and Eldridge's (2001) quick/easy/convenient model than a gift exchange model. For the University students, who are likely to be further along the transition to independence, the metaphorical enactment of relationships via the mobile is not part of their lives. Undeniably, "mobile phones provide a medium through which young people can sustain and invigorate their social networks" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming), but this does not necessarily render them 'symbolic' (see below) or even representative. Whereas SMS messages for teens are identified as having 'symbolic meaning', this is not evident amongst students.

It has been suggested, as presented above, that the mobile phone contains 'symbolic' aspects via its participation in discourse and display. For students themselves, it may suggest professionalism, independence and control, or romance, specialness and privacy – but the individuals studied do not aim to convey such meanings through ownership, display or use of their mobile phones. Ownership and use may be linked to how one perceives the self, but it is not used to present the self in everyday life (Goffman 1971). Newcastle University students do not, in contrast to Nafus and Tracey's (2002) research on UK teenagers, use mobile telephony in the construction and development of the self in the public arena. A mobile phone can still be perceived as "an extension of the self" (Roos 1993: 446), but the reason students feel they 'cannot live without' their mobiles is because they are their main mode of communication and contain their vital phone numbers.

Aesthetically speaking, as Harper (2002) himself suggests, there is not actually a great deal of difference between mobile phone handsets. For Newcastle students, although an outdated handset model is recognised as such, it is being able to use the services of a mobile network that is important. Work on Italian use of mobile phones has attempted to establish a difference between fashion accessories and the mobile, concluding that "in contrast to jewellery and accessories...communication and informational technologies are also in the sphere of necessity" (Fortunati 2002: 59).

Similarly, for the undergraduate users studied, the aesthetics of hardware and software are secondary to what Palen and Salzman (2002a) term 'netware' and 'bizware', *what the phone can actually do,* for the undergraduates studied. Existing theoretical frameworks thus cannot be successfully applied to the University of Newcastle data.

This thesis suggests, by contrast, that the ubiquity of mobile phones amongst the undergraduate population is not mere fashion statement or perceived need, but is instead an important communication tool. Making, maintaining and negotiating relationships, both inside and outside of the University context, is an essential part of the lives of young adults studying away from home. Whilst until recently students relied upon letters, messages and payphone calls to connect them to family and friends, today their higher communication expectations coupled with the easy availability and increasing cheapness of mobile phones, means that they can keep in regular contact with people from the 'home' base, as well as those at the University. Managing a flexible lifestyle – albeit via one's mobile phone – is an important part of the transition to independence.

Further, the labelling of behaviours and the mobile phone handset itself as 'symbolic' is seen as problematic by this thesis and its theoretical grounding. This is not to deny that mobile phones have *meaning* within the undergraduate population studied; but it is not symbolic meaning in an anthropological sense. 'Subscriber Identity Module' or 'SIM' cards literally contain a student communication network; use is part of the transition to independence; being a student today increasingly means having a mobile.[7] The mobile can, therefore, in the mind of the researcher, 'stand for' aspects of student identity including independence, busy lives, socialising practices and being a student. But the mobile phone handset is not invested with the deeper sense of symbolic importance that anthropology recognises. Symbols are more complex and involved ways of reading and representing the social world than mere association; they are rarely a direct reflection or representation of the social order in the way that using a mobile suggests one is being busy. Instead, they possess meaning invoked by the ways they are used by social actors that enable persons to make sense of the world around them, as part of a system of meaning. Objects, myths and rituals considered symbolic

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[7] The 'SIM' card is a (usually transferable) postage-stamp sized computer within a mobile handset that contains all the data associated with that phone, including names and numbers entered by the user.

are often cosmological as well as sociological; they help create and maintain a cognitive understanding of how the world works. The connection between a symbol and its meaning is arbitrary (Keesing 1981), unrelated to how it is used in a *functional* sense. Its meaning is understood and transmitted to others by its enactment within a cultural value system. Within anthropology, symbols "are felt to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it" (Geertz 1973: 127). The mobile phone can be seen to be a metaphor for business, immediacy, mobility, independence and perhaps inappropriate behaviour, but as a life-ordering symbol, it is vastly inadequate.

In addition to mobility and privacy (as discussed above), spontaneity and convenience are also viewed as positive factors by students themselves. Being able to make or change plans at short notice in any location benefits the nature of undergraduate life, and enables students to socialise in a more *ad hoc* manner, rather than always engaging in advance planning. Mobiles are also useful when someone is not on time, enabling them to ring ahead and let others know that they are on their way (this is particularly convenient for parents meeting their offspring from a late train home for the holidays). These factors are also important in arranging student schedules, as discussed in the next section.

Churchill and Wakeford find that, for the UK population as a whole, mobile telephony is "simply one of many means of keeping in contact with others" (Churchill and Wakeford 2002: 170). For Newcastle University students, it is the *primary* method of communication over distance. It currently supports the contemporary experience *and* is representative of it. This section has shown the different ways in which mobile telephony is used on campus at Newcastle University by undergraduate users, to communicate with the variety of people in their lives. Section 8.4 demonstrates its role in maintaining order within their complicated lives.

## 8.4 The Mobile Phone's Importance in Ordering and Organising

As well as enabling undergraduates to contact and arrange to meet family and friends, and to be supported by them during the transitional period at university, mobile telephony has other uses. The irregular and changing study hours of undergraduates

described in Chapter 6 can require careful organisation; contacting coursemates about the time of lectures or group study sessions is useful. Although not always time-consuming, the nature of student life - with its haphazard combination of lectures, seminars, private study time, working time, mealtimes, social times and in-between times – can benefit from a high level of organisation. The mobile phone has proved to a highly successful tool in ordering these multifarious aspects of being an undergraduate at Newcastle University today.

Commentators represent Western life as increasingly mobile (Urry 2000), but when examining the student population one is not merely looking at young people with disposable income and an ability to be mobile, but is also viewing a set of people living away from a permanent home area, yet returning there from time to time, trying to negotiate their way through time and space. Haddon (1997b) suggests that mobile phones are particularly useful for those who live away from their permanent home base, either frequently or irregularly. Students not only travel between parental home and university on a regular basis, but also to and within the student campus, and to and within a student home, not to mention shopping trips, travelling to participate in sports and going out to socialise. Haddon (1997b) also refers to young people as having an 'intense time economy'; students may have chunks of 'spare time' but the pressure of managing it in conjunction with everything else in their lives, is high. Mobile telephony arguably allows students to do more and organise more effectively – in short, to make the most of the university experience – and be under less pressure.

Being able to arrange to meet someone if a lecture is cancelled, rather than sit by oneself; being able to spontaneously make arrangements depending on one's schedule; and being able to liaise with housemates on- or off-campus about evening plans are all organisational aspects that can be met through mobile phone use. As Section 8.3 above demonstrates, answering, messaging and silent functions also allow mobile users to be contacted whilst they are participating in activities – private study, seminars, going to the cinema or out for a meal – where speaking on the mobile phone is not deemed appropriate. Although sometimes viewed as an 'easy life', including by some students themselves, for many undergraduates studying for a degree can be difficult both as an intellectual enterprise and/or an organisational feat. Schedules both between and within every degree course can differ. Organising group work as well as social meetings can be difficult and inconvenient without the aid of a mobile phone. Previously, if one was

unable to attend a lecture, the lecture would simply be missed. With the aid of the mobile phone, one can easily contact a coursemate or course leader to make sure notes or handouts can be borrowed.

Haddon (2000) identifies mobile phone use as part of an increase in flexibility of European social behaviour. What Ling terms 'micro-coordination' (Ling 2000c; Ling and Yttri 2002) enables a more spontaneous, convenient and last-minute arrangement and rearrangement of everyday activities. Given the complex and changing nature of student work/leisure schedules, it is understandable that the mobile phone is very useful for the Newcastle University student population.

Undergraduate finance can also be a struggle to control, as is clear from Chapter 6. Partly due to the abolition of student grants, the introduction of tuition fees and the financial climate this has created for students, an increasing number of students are finding it desirable, and in some cases necessary, to obtain and maintain a part-time job at some point during their university career - during termtime, outside of termtime, or a combination of both. Having a personal phone in the form of a mobile can be useful in both procuring work and organising shifts, or to arrange student loans and overdrafts, especially as many Newcastle undergraduates are frequently in transit but do not have, for example, an office number where calls can be taken or messages can be left. It is widely assumed by the general public that undergraduates attending university do not need a mobile phone. Making this assumption is problematic on many levels. It is often related to perceiving the student experience as uncomplicated and revolving around leisure practices which, as this thesis demonstrates, is not an accurate portrait of student life. Further, there are aspects of life at Newcastle University that make its undergraduates a social group that benefits from using mobile phones in many ways. Additionally, it is unlikely that any social group particularly *needs* a mobile phone – rather, mobile telephony benefits some people more than others. If university students are compared to, for example, employed persons or schoolchildren, they can be seen to benefit more extensively from mobile phones than these groups due to otherwise being unavailable for direct contact during their working day, and, in the case of those in Halls, at all other times. (Such a direct comparison is probably unfair, however, until ethnographic data regarding the benefit of mobile telephony in the lives of school pupils and employed persons becomes available.)

Having a mobile phone provides students with the means to more effectively manage complex schedules which involve study, leisure and employment patterns, in both university and home environments. As introduced in Section 8.2, the undergraduate lifestyle is associated with general patterns and rules of working life, socialising and responsibility for non-students in the UK being in abeyance. It is a transitional, liminal and uncertain period. Divisions such as day/night, study/leisure and week/weekend are messy and undefined.

Mobile telephony can bring these divisions more sharply into focus and create order from disorder. As the work of Mary Douglas (1966), referred to above, suggests, humans prefer to classify and divide things in a more ordered manner, finding it difficult to conceptualise 'matter out of place'. The traditionally disordered, nebulous and liminal nature of student life is thus already becoming more ordered, more like the world of the independent, professional, adult – and this is partly due to mobile telephony. The mobile phone is a tool that can mediate the combination of activities in life at the University, providing routine where there formerly was little, and ensuring that 'spare' time is not 'wasted'. In their study of mobile telephony in the US workplace during the early 1990s, Gant and Kiesler (2002) discovered that mobile telephony was effecting a *shift* by bringing personal calls into the workplace, and work calls into the home, thus 'blurring the boundaries' between the two domains. Conversely, amongst Newcastle undergraduates, the domains of work and leisure are already blurred, and the mobile actually helps make them more distinct. Students are able to order their study time, social lives and shifts for their jobs more easily because of the mobile.

As Bourdieu and Passeron (1979: 29) observed of 1960s French students, "encapsulated in the autonomy of university time, they escape, even more completely than their teachers, from the schedules of society at large, knowing no other deadline than the *dies irae* of the examination and no other timetable than the undemanding pattern of weekly lectures." For Newcastle undergraduates, this lack of routine and organisation is something that has marked them out from the population at large. Recently, mobile owners have been able to organise their time and schedules in a more formalised manner. As well as fear of disorder, and a desire to be in control of one's time, this ordering can also be viewed in another light. It can be perceived as part of the transition to independence undergone by contemporary Newcastle undergraduates,

who (as Chapter 6 shows) have recently come to exhibit a core set of behaviours that include a higher standard of living and an emphasis on style, that is more in tune with the lives of professional graduates than university students. Mobile telephony helps to order; it is also representative of a lifestyle that contains order. Concurrently, however, it is also representative of a high level of socialising that ensures undergraduate life retains a liminal nature. Mobile telephony is associated with both of these things because it is associated with the complexities of undergraduate life at Newcastle University today, as discussed in section 8.5 below.

## 8.5 The Mobile as an Integral Part of Student Life

Studies of wired and mobile telephony have examined the demographics of contemporary populations in terms of telephone use (Fielding and Hartley 1987; Katz and Aspden 1999). Others have chosen a more ethnographic approach, and situated use data within the everyday activities of those involved in phone communication (Haddon 1994; Lacohee and Anderson 2001). When researchers wish to learn about how individuals communicate according to the social groups to which they belong, they have traditionally used telephony data to represent the worlds of 'children', 'business people', 'parents', 'teens', 'the elderly' and 'women' without examining, not to mention deconstructing, these classifications and the behaviours associated with them. In addition, despite the claim to have investigated phone usage by these social groups, little existing research relates to university students and mobile phones. Haddon *et al.* (2001) refer to the 'economically inactive', but they never consider university undergraduates as a research category. Haddon and Silverstone (1994) have researched telephony in terms of the domestic household, but this bears little relation to the residences of students and their relation to phone use. Similarly, other social research on phones tends to be mired in dichotomous concepts such as work/leisure, public/private, home/away that would be restrictive if applied to a student population where life is at once complex, divided, blurred and confused.[8] Studying mobile telephony within a lifestyle that is nebulous and remains largely unresearched (Haselgrove 1994) has therefore required thorough examination of the everyday world of undergraduate users, to ensure an informed understanding.

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[8] Life is arguably all of these things for non-students also, but there is no comparable research.

The ethnographic data (in Chapters 6 and 7) demonstrates that students are a mobile population. They are viewed by this thesis as *semi-nomadic* or *transhumant*, regularly moving between family home and University residence, University residence and University campus, and campus building and campus building; they usually have more than one place they call 'home'. Given that the schedules of Newcastle undergraduates are differing, flexible and changeable, possessing a personal communication device allows mobile owners to communicate by phone in new places (i.e. Halls, Union social areas), and also enables them to communicate in new spaces – i.e. in transit between buildings. For a transient population such as that studied, a personal communication device such as the mobile phone thus provides a new means of contacting others and being contacted, which can enhance the way they communicate. Interestingly, students are exemplars of the commute – a transhumant journey from the family home to the university residence and back again at occasional weekends and during the vacation periods. They thus provide a prime example of a population frequently on the move. Work on Scandinavian usage of mobile phones (Ling 1997; Roos 1994) focuses on the usefulness of mobile use within holiday homes such as the Norwegian *hytte* and the Finnish country cottage that are usually without telephony or even electricity. Linking these second, occasional homes to a mobile telephone network increases availability in areas where there was previously no fixed line access. This is reminiscent of the need for students to use mobiles in lieu of domestic phones, if they do not have their own private fixed line connection.

As well as enabling students to communicate in these new areas with people external to the University of Newcastle context, mobile telephony also allows increased connectivity *within* the student population. Undergraduates no longer have to leave scribbled messages for their neighbours in Halls or for housemates in shared accommodation; they do not have to wait for access to a wired phone to communicate. Therefore, in addition to blurring the boundaries between university/society and university/home, the student as individual is now also potentially less isolated from the rest of the university population. The possibility of chatting or arranging to meet people regardless of timing or location is increased. The possibility of spending long hours by oneself at one's desk becomes less likely. The full implications of increased access to telephony for student social lives is unclear, but it is visible that having a

mobile now plays a part in the creation, maintenance and extension of one's social network for mobile owners.

The current sociability of student life for most Newcastle undergraduates also benefits from, and is perpetuated by, mobile phone use. The spontaneous making, changing and undoing of arrangements termed micro-coordination by Ling (2000c) is particularly useful for the population studied. Studying for a degree also allows for flexible, uninterrupted leisure time in a number of areas – with coursemates, with housemates, doing sports, as a member of society, with people from work, and so on. For students, this can require a high amount of co-ordination, which the mobile phone is able to provide.

Although initially linked with ambiguity and stigma, mobile telephony in the student population has subsequently taken on the mantle of the ordinary. Inappropriate use and fear of health risks are still occasionally mentioned, but the mobile is generally regarded positively amongst the population. The rapid adoption of mobile telephony suggests that it has easily slotted into the student way of life. The mobile phone is currently a popular social artefact outside of the University context, and simultaneously has an integral and specific role to play within it (the intricacies and implications of this role are explored here and in Chapter 7). Mobile telephony clearly has elements that are particularly beneficial to undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle today. For example, a perceived lack of existing telephone access and/or the privacy associated therewith; the relationships that are important to students; and the ability to locate and communicate in areas of study, are factors that help explain high rates of adoption and use by students at Newcastle. These factors, however, are also linked to a wider notion of what it can mean to be a student. This thesis maintains that core behaviours and attitudes within the population studied can also be shown to directly influence mobile phone adoption and usage.

MacNeill and Funston's (1999) report on 'young people' (16 to 24 year olds) and mobile phones in Australia shows that the cost of mobile telephony for this type of population can be problematic. They found that 25% of mobile users had 'difficulty' or a 'struggle' paying their bill, with 17% experiencing an associated 'level of anxiety or depression'. For students at Newcastle University, however, mobile telephony is part of a wider experience of expenditure and debt that includes the expense of going out, going shopping and so on, and does not seem to cause particular problems for the

population as a whole. That those undergraduates with the most income are more likely to own mobiles, and more likely to spend more on them, highlights the discrepancy within the population between those who participate in core student behaviours such as high levels of social spending, increased debt and living away from home, and those who do not. Owning and using a mobile phone has become a part of the core student experience for undergraduates at the University of Newcastle, regardless of affordability.

Although strategies are employed and SMS costs can be measured, this does not mean that Newcastle students automatically keep their mobile phone costs low. In fact monthly call costs may seem quite high for a group with limited means. Coupled with existing concerns about debt, mobile phones may be helping students spend more than they have. With regard to Finnish mobile phone use, Roos (2001) suggests that the increased cost of using a mobile phone (as compared to a fixed line) can produce debt problems of an especially problematic nature for young people. Amongst the student population, enthusiastic adoption of mobile telephony where there are no fixed lines may be leading to increased expenditure on communications, which eats into the student budget. The student population, due to demographic changes and the collision between student and youth lifestyles, may demonstrate a way of living not suited to all budgets which, nevertheless, many undergraduates feel compelled to adopt.

Although limited, student income tends to become available in large chunks such as student loans, overdrafts and parental allowances. Buying a mobile handset and connection upfront is thus easily done. Although not adopted by all students, the marketing of mobile phones via bank and credit card offers, and advertisements[9] including offers such as the 'Orange on-campus' mobile deal (displayed in the Union and The Courier), helps to sustain an image of this type of communication being an important part of undergraduate life. Further, students have control of their disposable income, some for the first time in their lives, and can therefore choose to make their own spending decisions, both in terms of purchasing a mobile phone and making calls. Student income tends to become available in large chunks such as student loans, parental allowances, or wages. Making an initial mobile purchase is thus made easier.

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[9] The University of Newcastle is the first UK university to be represented on a special edition board for the game of Monopoly. The board includes an advertisement for the firm *studentmobiles.com*.

The popularity of using mobile phones also occurs at a time when young people are expected to learn about financial responsibility, but most often experience this via trial and error.

As early as 1995, the UK already had "a higher education system subsidized by student debt" (McCarthy and Humphrey 1995: 1). This thesis suggests that current normalising attitudes towards debt may encourage students to spend money on mobile phone call costs. Money saving strategies are employed, but the fact that students think they can afford mobile telephony may be connected to the extended cash flow available to them via overdrafts and loans, *as well as* the perceived need for communication the mobile offers. As well as providing connectivity to support networks, mobile telephony enables full exploitation of the 'leisure and pleasure' aspects of contemporary student life (Humphrey and McCarthy 1995: 81), which again may encourage further spending. This may not be a concern for those able to participate in such behaviours, but for those who cannot, it may entail social exclusion. These behaviours fall within the parameters of what Chatterton (1999) has labelled the 'traditional' form of being a student. Aspects of undergraduate life associated with post-A-level 'traditional-entry' undergraduates - i.e. 'going away' to study, access to borrowed money, certain ways of socialising - are clearly visible within the population studied and, it is suggested, have combined to construct a dominant student lifestyle that the mobile phone both assists and represents. The mobile phone is not only becoming a requisite student possession in practical terms; it is also becoming a requisite part of 'being a student' today.

In a society where more students are taking part-time work to support themselves financially, more students are dropping out of their courses, and the education system favours those who can rely on financial support from their family (Jones 1995: 10) or elsewhere, it is unsurprising that the demographics and behaviours of undergraduates have recently undergone great change. Changes in student finance may have led to fewer applications from non-middle class students or the 'dropping out' of those who begin university but subsequently cannot cope financially. It has been suggested that such effects are not solely attributable to funding changes, but Pilkington suggests that student "incomes have fallen below widely accepted levels of subsistence" (Pilkington 1994: 69). This begets an increasingly middle-class university intake (Chatterton 1999) who have their basic needs already paid for – shelter, travel, food, bills – and can use loans and overdrafts to increase their spending on increased leisure consumption.

Media reports comment on the problem of funding a contemporary university education as a barrier to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (see for example Copeland 2000), whilst reporting on increasing living standards for an increasing proportion of students in the UK. In parallel with the data produced by this thesis, a recent Guardian article highlights the discrepancy between students ten years ago, "a body of young adults more associated with a penny-pinching, bargain-hunting, happy hour mentality – now commonly hiring limos, swigging cocktails and going on exotic holidays" (Shabi 2002: 16) who, often because they have large amounts of credit available to them, decide to sustain the highest standard of living possible by running up debts that they do not have to pay for some time. Going away to live with others, to socialise heavily (at least initially) and in the expected ways, to buy the expected clothes and to have a mobile phone, makes being a student expensive. Enrolling on a course and supporting oneself may be relatively affordable - enrolling in the contemporary student experience may not. One way problems with finance are affecting the student lifestyle is that more students are choosing to stay at home to study (Cottell 2001), in many cases to cut costs. Yet as living at home tends to isolate students from the wider undergraduate experience, local students are thus not able to enter into core undergraduate behaviours socially (and possibly financially), whilst those students who do manage to enact such behaviour become a more coherent group with a stronger identity. Their experience of mobile telephony, if they choose to adopt it, similarly differs – local students are less likely to possess extensive social networks with other students, and they are more likely to have adequate fixed line access.

Another factor encouraging mobile phone ownership within the Newcastle undergraduate population is the 'snowball' effect of exponential increase achieved by the amount of time spent in close proximity with student friends and colleagues. Although status is not achieved via having a mobile phone or a particular sort of phone within the student population, if an increasing number of other people in the vicinity are using a mobile in seemingly beneficial ways, this can provide encouragement (and possibly pressure) to purchase one. Although exclusion is not directly an issue in terms of relationships – owners and non-owners of mobiles can and do belong to the same friendship groups – not having a mobile can lead students to feel 'left out' when others are using them.

Unlike many other young people, most students live with neither family nor a partner, as Chapter 6 shows. They make their homes either in separate rooms in university accommodation, or in shared houses. Combined with the fact that most students have highly differing timetables, this can mean that students will spend a considerable amount of time in transit between home and campus and other areas by themselves. Although the students interviewed are not overly concerned with this circumstance, mobile phones do offer a way of making students, particularly females, feel 'safe.' To the European population at large, carrying a mobile phone for safety/emergency reasons is quite common (Haddon *et al.* 2001). Rakow and Navarro (1993) show that this is explicitly the case for some women in the US. In Berry's (1995) study of female students in a university in Manchester, security was found to be a psychological worry for the sample. It is not surprising, therefore, that students, in particular females, do refer to safety as part of their reason for having a mobile phone.

The mobile phone was once predominantly a business artefact used in a typically male domain. Mass-marketing of the technology and its subsequent adoption in non-'yuppie' spheres has, nevertheless, seen a persisting association of mobile telephony with males in some market sectors. In the student domain, however, usage is not prescribed along gender lines; it is as such also related to, and representative of, the way gender relations in the university sphere may be different to those in the UK as a whole. Although gendered behaviour does take place on campus, a similar proportion of men and women own mobiles irrespective of gender, and use them for chatting, arranging and locating in similar ways. This is perhaps to be expected in an environment where gender difference are less marked, and platonic relationships between members of the opposite sex are common (Moffatt 1989). It is nevertheless worthy of note, in light of existing evidence that mobile phone use usually involve gender discrepancy.

Existing research on telephony focuses on gender differences as responsible for differing calling patterns on both wired and wireless telephones (Lacohee and Anderson 2001; Rakow and Navarro 1993). Males are seen to use telephony more for business, arrangement and information calls, whilst women 'chat' socially (Dordick and LaRose 1992), a pattern that has existed since women were the first to exploit the social potential of telephony (Martin 1991). Rakow (1992) suggests that the importance of social phone calls in women's lives makes them the central

communicative focus within US households. Moyal's Australian research (1992) concludes that women may have more intimate conversations with friends on the phone than face-to-face. Ling is also interested in the role of gender and its influence on the use of telephony, focusing on the finding that in Norway, "women's use of the telephone is integral in their role as maintainers of the social network" (Ling 1998: 1).

Ling also suggests that in Norway the mobile was used, along with cars and clothing, to mark gender distinction within the adolescent age group. For young men especially, it was "a visual sign of independence and economic wherewithal" (Ling 1999: 17). Although independence does play a large factor in mobile phone ownership and use (see below), this is not visible along gender lines in the Newcastle student population. Allowing for cross-cultural differences, all the signs seem to suggest that telephony is only gendered because practices within society are gendered. Although Tannen's (1991) theories have been used to support suggested differences between gendered ways of using telephony, her work focuses on the micro-content of conversations – e.g. that men and women argue differently, ask questions differently, and so on – and would not necessarily support, for example, the notion that women are more likely to chat on the phone compared to men.

This thesis accepts that there are subtle differences between the ways male and female students behave (or are expected to behave), but it concludes that the overarching influence upon mobile use is student lifestyle in general. Both male and female students use mobile phones for the same communicative purposes. Both men and women admit to spending up to an hour on the phone at a time, making large numbers of short calls and making extensive use of SMS. It may be the case that the mobile phone offers young adult males a personal, private medium that encourages them to chat more, or that 'going away' to university encourages them to stay in touch on the phone with family and friends. It is clear, however that within the Newcastle student population, undergraduates are pursuing an education regardless of gender; and that their being somewhat exempt from the gender demarcations that persist in the workplace and the domestic household in UK society in general, greatly contributes to the similarity between the ways they use mobiles.

Adherence to a feminist perspective within the theoretical framework (as introduced in Chapter 3) includes the view that gender relations are socially constructed in UK society. That many stereotypical elements of gender are absent at the University of

Newcastle further stresses the special nature of the population. Authors such as Cockburn and Ormrod (1993) have suggested that technology disempowers women, or at least places them at a disadvantage. This thesis would argue that, again, this is dependent on context. It is understandable that existing research sees the powerplay of gender relations as mediated by technology – within domestic and business settings this might be expected. The democratic adoption and use of mobile phones by male and female students demonstrates, however, that mobile telephony as a technology can support male power structures only in certain domains where marked gender differences already exist. For the purpose of this thesis, the mobile phone is conceptualised as a technology or tool in the *broadest* sense of the word. Within the University of Newcastle population it is not viewed as something technical that allows student males to hold dominance over student females, or something that men would prefer due to its gadgetry. Students do not view the mobile as 'technology' or a 'gadget' *per se*.

The concept of women as 'caretakers' of the wired phone, and users of the mobile phone for social or domestic purposes, is therefore rendered redundant for the majority of the population studied. It seems evident that what is observed here is not necessarily 'gendered' use but use related to social roles such as 'mother' and 'homemaker' within a domestic context. This may be because people assume gender patterns to be replicated in wireless technology use, or because studying mobiles in terms of the work/leisure dichotomy has enforced gender divisions. Whatever the reason, the glaring omission from all of these studies is the relevancy of gender divisions to the population studied. Gender is taken as a given; it often sounds as if it is something physically ascribed, an essential characteristic that provides an accepted division on which to explore differing communicative behaviours is assumed. This thesis instead argues, after Caplan (1987) and Butler (1990), that gender is socially and culturally constructed, and its meaning may thus differ both between and within populations. Overall, mobile telephony is used by the male and female undergraduates studied in similar ways because, within the context studied, their lives and behaviours are similar.

For the undergraduate population at Newcastle University, both short-term and long-term sexual or 'intimate' relationships form an important part of student life for many, whether conducted within Newcastle or engaging in a 'long distance relationship'. Mobile telephony has a role both in the creation and maintenance (and sometimes the

end) of these relationships. According to Grinter and Eldridge (2001), younger teens also use mobiles for instigating and maintaining intimate relationships. Communication via one's mobile rather than a wired phone in the parental home affords teens privacy in these types of relationships, as well as the 'special' attention that getting a romantic text message gives. This is also relevant for the individuals in relationships at Newcastle University. It is arguable, however, that mobile communication is even more crucial for the maintenance of their relationships for students without an accessible wired phone. In addition, the varied student lifestyle may make it difficult to contact a partner if one does not have a mobile phone for personal and private use at all times and in all places. Interestingly, although surveillance and control is not a parent/child issue, it can feature here. It is evident from the data on relationships, however, that many of the problems in both long distance and university based relationships emanate from communication problems. Mobile telephony is thus useful for the types of relationships conducted at Newcastle University, which rarely involve cohabitation and are often conducted across large distances.

In the areas specified above, and life as a Newcastle student in general, the adoption and use of mobile telephony by undergraduates is, to them, becoming a necessary part of the contemporary student experience. Although variables such as income may affect mobile phone adoption and use, such differences do not negate the fact that most students own mobile phones and learn to use them in very similar ways, in association with the key elements of life at the University, as presented in Chapter 6. This thesis argues, therefore, that although there is a wealth of detail influencing adoption and use of mobile phones, as presented in Chapter 8, the overarching significant reason for adopting and using a mobile phone amongst students is due to its increasingly apt role in the many varied aspects of student life today. Although for the undergraduate users studied, the mobile phone is not an object of display or status *per se* as Section 8.3 discusses, it still retains potential as a signifier. For students themselves it seems to represent factors such as independence; being able to communicate with the external and internal worlds; socialising; one's ability to organise and manage one's schedule, and so on. In short, it is both part of, and representative of, participation in the behaviours associated with the dominant contemporary undergraduate lifestyle.

This thesis concludes that the mobile phone is a multi-faceted tool that has rapidly become an integral part of undergraduate student lives at the University of Newcastle. Used in the domains of study, work and leisure, for, *inter alia,* chatting, arranging and locating, mobile phone calls and text messages currently provide connectivity for the majority of the undergraduate population studied. Neither mere fashion accessory nor business tool (as might have been assumed given existing research), the mobile phone instead fulfils a more complex and varied role. This is due to the nature of contemporary student life at the University of Newcastle, which has encouraged the adoption and use of mobile telephony in multiple ways. The benefits offered by the mobile phone – including mobility, SMS, privacy – provide a unique service in many areas of undergraduate life. Commenting on the early adoption of mobiles in Finland, Roos (1993: 456) states that:

> "It seems obvious that mobile telephones facilitate far more flexible work arrangements, a more intense private contact network, increased sociability for those who need it, [and] an opportunity to combine an active, mobile way of life with the types of contacts previously related only to staying at home."

These are exactly the type of benefits that appeal to the Newcastle undergraduates studied.

Utilising Cockburn and Dilic's (1994) 'circuit' of technology approach rather than an 'impact' model, this thesis set out to understand the mutually shaping effects of the mobile phone and the population that has adopted it. Data emerging from the study suggests that although the functions offered by mobile technology have the potential to open up new worlds, it is clearly the nature of the contemporary student population which has led to the importance of mobile telephony within the sample. Studied by one anthropologist, whose views and interpretations are unique, this thesis remains a partial representation of the Newcastle University population, its behaviours and attitudes. This does not negate its validity, however, and it argues, regardless, that detailed knowledge regarding the daily lives of the population using the technology studied is imperative in order to make any form of informed interpretation.

The data presented in Chapter 7 on mobile phone ownership, purchase, usage and meanings within the student population contains elements which this thesis suggests are specific to contemporary student life. Using mobile phones to order one's schedule,

maintain relationships with friends and family in another area, make social arrangements within the University context, procure and maintain a part-time job and check on times for lectures - these are activities which can all currently occur in the context of the lives of Newcastle University undergraduates. Not only are these behaviours enabled by the popularity of mobile phones, but they are also signifiers of what it means to be a student at Newcastle today.

This section has suggested that the role of mobile telephony in student lives today has been shaped as much by recent behaviours and attitudes within the student population as it helps these to be shaped, reified and refined. The Newcastle University context itself has also been shaped by external and encroaching socio-economic changes. Undergraduates at Newcastle University are experiencing a specific time in their lives and exhibiting certain behaviours associated with this, as related in Chapter 6. These behaviours, and the demographics and attitudes of the student population at this time, contribute to how mobile phones are used and perceived. Not only is the adoption and use of mobile telephony by undergraduate students at the University of Newcastle linked to the core behaviours associated with the population, it also represents and reveals the changed and changing nature of these behaviours, as presented in section 8.6.

## 8.6 Mobile Phones and Changes in Student Life

Section 8.5 demonstrated that the mobile telephone is an integral part of undergraduate student life at the University of Newcastle today. This section acknowledges that this is partly due to the enabling potentialities offered by the technology, but that it is also directly associated with the changed and changing nature of the population studied, as visible in Chapters 5 and 6. The behaviours of the individuals studied, particularly those associated with recent changes, have arguably made students particularly receptive to the rapid adoption of mobile telephony. Williams (1974) has similarly argued that concurrent social changes set the climate for the adoption of technologies including fixed line telephony that are termed 'symptomatic'. Taylor and Harper identify mobile usage as "a manifestation and a reflection of deeply routed needs in these social relationships" (Taylor and Harper forthcoming: 3). This thesis suggests that if any population were likely to benefit from having mobile phones, it would be

that within a campus university without a substantial fixed line phone network in student residences.[10]

Recent shifts in the way undergraduate life is enacted at Newcastle have led to a core set of behaviours being demonstrated within the University. Mobile telephony use brings into focus recent changes at the University. Studying away from home remains a popular tradition, despite a small proportion of local students attending the institution. University housing policy has encouraged undergraduates to live in Halls during their first year and live out in a shared house during subsequent years. This has, over the past two decades, helped to emphasise the relationships between those living together as of paramount importance.

Student life is conceptualised as a liminal stage within this thesis, partly because most undergraduates neither live at home nor have properly left it. Jones states that "leaving the parental home is a normal part of the overall process of transition from dependent childhood to independent citizenship" (Jones 1995: 1). As well as being neither adolescents, nor adults, nor even young adults, undergraduate students form a messy conceptual category, as they are making a physical and symbolic move away from home, but tend to regularly return to it. The mobile phone, which provides a potential 24-hour connection to this home location, allows negotiation of the divide and differences between University and home and the maintenance of relationships, during this ambiguous (and largely unexplored) change in lifestyle and status.

Social research into higher education has identified the university system as different and changing since the mid-1990s (Scott 1997; Haselgrove 1994); this has influenced the different and changing nature of the contemporary undergraduate population at Newcastle. Changes in government funding, combined with increased student access to credit, has both shifted the demographics of the student population and contributed to an emphasis on consumer spending for the majority of students. Furthermore, the mobile phone's popularity with students demonstrates the blurring of boundaries between the student domain and society in general that has escalated in recent years. The dominant undergraduate contingent who aspire to a higher standard of living,

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[10] It is, however, becoming more common to find these wired networks on campus, and there may be contrasts between mobile uses within these university environments although some similarities are likely to remain.

frequent socialising and increased consumer expenditure enact a lifestyle that resembles that of professionals in terms of its stylistic and consumption-oriented aspects.

In 1968 Oxtoby commented that "for most university students, their undergraduate years coincide with late adolescence and early adulthood. Some university arrangements and policies can be seen as deliberate attempts to extend this period of uncertainty and to delay full adulthood" (Oxtoby 1968: 444). Hollands (1995) and Chatterton and Hollands (2001) see this extended adolescent period as important, both for students and for other 'youth' within UK society. They suggest that the 'going out' behaviour of other young people is coming to resemble student life, with an extended leisure phase at the beginning of adulthood common for many young adults. Combined with shifts in student tastes in the last half-decade or so, as Chapter 6 demonstrates, it is becoming difficult, in some ways, to distinguish between students and youth. At Newcastle University, the days of most students struggling to exist on a limited income within a student enclave have ended.

As historical data shows, until relatively recently most students at the University of Newcastle ate, drank and socialised relatively cheaply and wore practical not stylish clothes, possessing, overall, fairly limited lifestyles and incomes; these were the 'traditional' students of their day. Now, however, as is discussed extensively in Chapter 6, 'traditional' or 'core' behaviours have different connotations. In addition to being students, the 18 to 24 year olds studied can also fit variously into the 'late adolescent', 'youth' or 'young adult' categories. The research herein not only discovers behaviours and attitudes that are student specific, but also recognises that students are increasingly part of 'youth' 'consumer' culture. Chatterton's research at Bristol University reached similar conclusions:

"In the early part of the twentieth century, 'traditional' students represented the majority of university students in Britain. While such students currently represent a much smaller part of the British student population, there still exist large numbers of traditional students who tend to be white, aged between 18 and 21, originate from privileged social and economic backgrounds, have wealthy parents, studied at fee-paying, private schools and travel away from home to university. These students, then, come from the wealthiest sections of British society...and are made more visible...by their social and economic

privilege, high disposable incomes and pre-occupation with fashion and youth culture" (Chatterton 1999: 118).

The majority of Newcastle students have enthusiastically adopted a technology also popular with the UK population in general, especially the 'younger generation', who are generally considered more adaptable to new technologies and behaviours (Meyrowitz 1985). The use of mobile phones within UK society as a whole cannot be separated from their popularity with students, particularly as students are becoming increasingly integrated with the external population. Marked differences between 'home' and 'university' still persist for Newcastle students, but the boundary between these is currently subject to erosion, effected partly by mobile phone use, and partly by other changes in university life. The uneasy liminality of the student transition can be rendered more concrete as undergraduates regularly keep in touch with persons from both 'university' and 'home', allowing them to constantly re-formulate their identity in relation to both locales.

The 18-24 year old age group studied can thus be increasingly viewed as part of 'youth' 'consumer' culture. Although the boundaries between what it means to be a 'student' or part of the 'youth' sector are blurred and unfixed, as part of an age group which have been noted as early adopters of technology it might have been predicted that, despite a low income, students of this age would wish to purchase mobile phones. At this age young people tend to be free of the responsibilities of home ownership or dependents; despite a usually limited income, this means they are able to spend a large proportion of their money income on consumer goods if desired. Ling (2000a) views teens in Norway as an important sector of society who experienced the 'golden age' of mobile phone adoption during the time period 1998-1999, and were thus a key group in examining the role of adoption. He found, however, that adoption levels were highest within the 20 to 24 age group (Ling 2000b), one that he has neglected to explore in more detail. Ling's 1999 research states that "there are significantly higher mean levels of calling among the teens and young adults" (Ling 2000b: 10), that he suggests is due partly to the availability of pre-paid subscriptions, and "that for teens and young adults, [the mobile telephone] has overtaken the role of the traditional telephone" (Ling 2000b: 11). Data from Newcastle University students would suggest that differences in usage patterns are explicitly related to the behaviours of being a student, but it is clear

they need to be considered as part of the 'youth' sector, particularly as it is more difficult to make the student/youth division in current times.

Taking the period of 'being a student' as a key transitional period that has become arguably more fragile in recent years, it is again evident that mobile telephony has both a functional and symbolic role to play in social maturation, as section 8.2 demonstrates. Duhig (unpublished: 15) presents undergraduates in contrast to the 'wired professional', who usually has a readily available email portal on their office desk. Undergraduates, by contrast, must visit a computer centre or something similar to engage in this form of communication. This supports the observation at Newcastle that students are keen to use mobile phones because of the difference in their lifestyle from other members of the population – they are not perpetually wired to a phone line during their daily lives, thus the advantages of a wireless phone are more marked. The visible differences between the lives of undergraduate students and young professionals influence the adoption and use of mobile phones, as well as the increasing similarities between them. Similarly, Moffatt (1991) found that university students at Rutgers were strongly influenced by 'youth culture' in general.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) found of French university students in the 1960s that there was no one fixed identity of being a student. At the University of Newcastle (and possibly other English universities), however, the 'student experience' is becoming increasingly homogenised, with less room for different ways of being. Students can be identified by their consumption of 'cultural capital', as in the Bourdieu and Passeron study, but rather than moving along a cultural scale, the attitudes of students echo those of non-students. Bourdieu and Passeron suggest that just because students have common spaces that they occupy and common leisure pursuits, this does not mean that a common, positive, student identity exists. This chapter allows that all individuals are different and respond to the choices presented when a student in different ways, but nevertheless argues that a core set of undergraduate behaviours exist at the University of Newcastle, that newcomers are expected to (quite literally) buy into and adopt. The details of how these behaviours are enacted may differ, but the behaviours – particularly the leisure behaviours – remain similar. Although, as Bourdieu and Passeron argue, social origin can have a part to play in student life, the overarching contemporary student experience manages to overcome social differences and ensure that the majority of undergraduates at Newcastle practice behaviours and consume

'leisure and pleasure' in much the same way, regardless of gender, sexuality, class and so on. This is connected to changes in student finance within the last decade, as the demographics of the student population are likely to have altered, but also reiterates the narrowness of the contemporary student lifestyle. Whilst, as Bourdieu and Passeron suggested, class may affect aesthetic taste, Newcastle students are likely to practice clubbing, drinking, living within common units and spending money on clothes, records and entertainment regardless of social background. Such activities are an important part of contemporary life at the University for a substantial (and possibly increasing) proportion of undergraduates; it contributes to their identity.

Bourdieu and Passeron refuse to see the common patterns in the use of free time by students as a positive definition of identity, but this thesis disagrees. It may be precisely because, as they say, "most students have nothing in common beyond attending the same lectures" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979: 31) that a consumption-led identity has flourished. The core set of behaviours generally adopted by students means that Newcastle undergraduates can be identified as a social group. It is clear, however, that they are a group that allows variety in personal identity and behaviours. Bourdieu and Passeron suggest that students only have symbolic behaviours in common, but the Newcastle evidence suggests that today's undergraduates may have more commonalities. Since the mid-20$^{th}$ century, student life at Newcastle University has rapidly transformed into an enmeshed set of behaviours that students adopt, in which they find meaning and identity, and which they display and market to subsequent generations of students. Bourdieu and Passeron might suggest that this is mere posturing, but in its provision of meaning within the liminal, undefined student sphere that has changed and is being changed, such a behaviour-led identity is real and important for contemporary students.

As Chatterton and Hollands (2001: 96) confirm, "the increase of students as a proportion of the total number of people coupled with the mainstreaming of youth and musical cultural styles, has led to a blurring of the division between student and local nightlife." It has also led to a blurring of the other existing boundaries between students and non-students, as this thesis shows. Instead of "the individual at odds with society" as in past times (Wilson 1962: 83), students today are becoming further integrated with the external social world (partly due to mobile telephony). It would be advantageous if the erosion of this boundary encourages local, mature and part-time

students to engage in the student experience, but it is possible that the experience they will obtain will contrast sharply with the typical, 'traditional' undergraduate experience of 'going away to university' to study full-time. Although the UK student population has increased greatly in number within recent years, allowing access to new types of students (Chatterton 1999: 2), the concept of 'being a student' for Newcastle University undergraduates still revolves around a certain lifestyle. Those who do not adhere to this lifestyle are stigmatised, and usually set apart, physically and symbolically, by other students.

To conclude, this section has suggested that the 'traditional' or 'core' student experience has changed vastly within just a few decades. Mobile phone ownership and use is related to changes in student life, and society in general, that have occurred in recent years. These include the increasing popularity of mobile telephony, but are not restricted to it. Over time, being a student has become increasingly associated with mainstream youth fashions and behaviours, as is presented in previous chapters. Whether associated with changes in the demographics of the university population via the wider socio-economic context; shifts in popular and youth culture; or both, the behaviours constituting the majority of undergraduates' time at the University are more marked than ever before. The adherence or attempted adherence to this student lifestyle is likely to encourage ownership and use of the artefact of the *zeitgeist*, the mobile phone. Living away from home in Halls, extensively socialising, and wishing to coordinate the various aspects of one's life during one's working day – these factors, coupled with other contexts and behaviours specifically associated with 'being a student', demonstrate just why the mobile phone is so popular with the student population.

This thesis hesitates to invoke the concept of a student *habitus* (Chatterton 1999; Bourdieu 1977) as presented in Chapter 2; it is felt this would draw further attention from the differing, individual ways of operating *within* the core set of behaviours associated with undergraduates at Newcastle University that are presented in Chapter 6.[11] Mobile phone use does, however, have a role to play in bringing together the key

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[11] Undergraduate behaviours are seen by the thesis to be subject to changes and re-interpretation in a more fluid sense, as per Foucault's technologies of the self (Martin *et al.* 1988), although this theory is itself not wholly applicable, and does not therefore constitute part of the conceptual framework.

elements that constitute contemporary student identities, reifying them and re-enacting them on a lived basis. Mobile telephony has a part to play in the wider context of change, and also helps reveal the types of change. As academic work on mobile phones now recognises (Palen, Salzman and Youngs 2000), lifestyle and social context is imperative when understanding mobile phone use. Identifying key student behaviours has thus been an important part of this thesis.

## 8.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, mobile phone usage is widespread amongst the undergraduate population studied, responding to a changing student lifestyle, and effecting changes within it. There are various reasons why students use mobiles - and use them in the ways that they do - that are resonant with the uses exhibited by non-students within the same age group (i.e. for socialising, or communicating via SMS). There are also myriad reasons why students use mobiles in specific ways due to their specifically being students (i.e. living in student residences where phone access can be a problem, wanting to keep in touch with family and friends back home, trying to organise work and study), and being *specific types* of students (i.e. exhibiting high levels of socialising, living away from home, being less concerned about debt). Finally, coming full circle, and further demonstrating the collapsing of the boundary between students and non-students, this thesis suggests that students also use mobiles in certain ways because the dominant student lifestyle has recently changed, from something that was once perceived as 'alternative' and 'different' to that of young professionals, but now increasingly resembles it (at the expense of those who cannot afford to participate). Overall, this thesis concludes that mobile phones are popular with students because students are both similar to, yet different from, other young adults in UK society. Mobile phones have not so much effected change in student behaviours as they have been amalgamated into existing uses and meanings with the contemporary undergraduate population. Although a new technology, for students mobile telephony is merely part of a complex process of change in the university system; it is part of a much wider picture, which this thesis has attempted to present and explain.

Having a mobile phone has, for Newcastle undergraduates, altered the ability to organise, socialise, and be supported by others in the transition to independence. Rather than changing the nature of the student population and its behaviours, however,

mobile telephony instead provides an understanding of the changing nature of the student population itself. That the mobile telephone is such an important technology in student life demonstrates that a) undergraduates are not dissimilar from other individuals within the UK, particularly 'young people'; and that b) there are, however, specific behaviours and attitudes amongst the contemporary, yet changing, undergraduate population at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, that make using the mobile phone more important to students in practical terms than other young adults. Mobile telephony *is* bringing students increasingly closer to the rest of society; but this is part of a process that was already underway. As such, an impact model is redundant in understanding the role of this artefact within the population studied.

An anthropological approach, that views the role of mobile telephony through students themselves, is more compatible with a social shaping approach (see Taylor and Harper forthcoming). The 'student experience' is unique, and thus students do not conceptualise mobile telephony as changing their lives because, as far as they are concerned, their entire way of life has changed upon attending the university. Although it retains some marked differences in lifestyle, as discussed earlier in this chapter, student life has, over time, become less separated from the rest of society. Using the mobile telephone to keep in touch with 'the outside world', and not exist on an isolated campus is part of and representative of this change, but it has not ushered in a 'revolution'. It is clear that, on some level, mobile telephony is already transforming the experience of 'going away to university', enabling both increased independence from and enhanced communication to the home area. Yet this thesis demonstrates that existing boundaries within student lives were already nebulous and contested. The mobile phone may be a part of a process of change, but it is not the only catalyst. General changes in student lifestyle are also responsible for the movement of symbolic boundaries (on campus, for example, it is not just mobile telephony that can be perceived to intrude into quiet areas, but also the general conversations of 'Sloanes').

The data contained within the thesis contrasts with existing literature in several ways. Models examining use of mobiles 'at work' or 'in the home' were not appropriate for this study. Newcastle students do not retain mobiles purely for work/study purposes, but neither do they, in contrast to teens, utilise them on a predominantly local, social basis. Furthermore, although tensions do exist regarding 'inappropriate' usage of mobile phones, the fact that students can communicate on a private phone in places

where they previously could not generally has a positive, rather than an ambiguous, meaning. Existing research is, however, of interest when examining the research results. It provides parallels, and stresses differences. It has the potential to both support the findings of this thesis, and for the research herein to explore the differences between student use of telephony and the use patterns of others. Thus the research findings are discussed in the context of existing research (with the implications for existing and future research investigated in Chapter 9).

This thesis suggests that the mobile phone is an important artefact in student life, with symbolic connotations. It has a role to play in enabling the production and reproduction of core behaviours associated with undergraduates at the University of Newcastle, *and* in the transition to independence presented as a *rite de passage*. It is an ordering and organising tool within student lives. Ownership and usage of mobile phones by the undergraduate population at Newcastle has symbolic resonance, although in ways not normally associated with young people. It plays a part in courtship, socialisation and consumption behaviours, which are conceptualised here as part of the *liminal* phase that being at the University entails; it simultaneously makes the liminality of student life less separate from the social world in general, and less difficult to negotiate.

The sections above have focused on what this thesis regards as the most convincing explanations for the popularity and communication behaviours of the undergraduate population studied, and has situated them both within the student context explored within Chapters 6 and 7, and in terms of existing research in this and similar areas. The thesis emphasises that the relation of the results to existing studies, *and* a thorough exploration of everyday student life, is imperative in gaining an informed understanding of the use and meaning of mobile phones in student lives. The myriad uses and meanings connected to mobile telephony are shown to be intertwined with the core behaviours of the undergraduate population at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Mobile telephony is both part of, and representative of, undergraduate behaviour at the University of Newcastle. It facilitates both independence and interdependence, and supports work, study and leisure. The importance of mobile telephony to students has been discussed extensively in these terms and in relation to existing research in this chapter.

# Chapter 9: Project Overview and Future Research

## 9.1 Introduction

This chapter reiterates the main conclusions from the project in summary, situating them in the context of existing research, and assessing their implication for future research. It also assesses the usefulness of the theoretical approaches and types of method adopted, suggesting possible refinements, and areas to which more attention could have been paid. This again feeds into the possibilities for future research on a similar topic or using similar methods although, as Section 9.5 demonstrates, the thesis already demonstrates that the potential for related research is high. The implications of the key research findings for the student population, and the various disciplines involved in these areas of research, are also considered. An overview of how the thesis is structured is also included. Finally, this chapter fulfils the role of a narrative conclusion to the project, aiming to 'tie up the loose ends' by uttering a 'final word' of closure to the research process.

## 9.2 Discussion Summary

In the previous discussion chapter it was concluded that mobile phones play an integral part in contemporary student lives at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, to a certain degree because of the nature of these lives. The student population today largely benefits from the mobile phone as support system, organiser, locator and communicator, within physical and ideological spaces that have traditionally been disassociated from 'the real world' or society at large – i.e. the redbrick campus, student residences, quiet places such as lectures and libraries. Further, the current emphasis on the 'leisure and pleasure' aspects of student life increases its utility, enabling students to engage more easily in the socialising and courtship behaviours that have come to represent 'being a student' today. Combined with usefulness in relation to safety and the part-time job sector, the mobile telephone is a key artefact with potential for every aspect of student life.

The thesis has suggested that the lack of adequate private telephony systems for Newcastle undergraduates, on- and off-campus, has led to certain communicative

practices being effected by mobile phone. Students have also been shown to be occupying a specific stage in the transition to adulthood which increases the benefit they accrue from mobile telephony. Study schedules are haphazard, the working week is turned upside down, and the relationship to the home has shifted and is nebulous. Finally, the increasing similarity between student life and that of other young people means that the general popularity of mobile phones within the 'youth' sector is likely to influence student use outside of the university arena. Unlike other groups, however, the stylistic and 'symbolic' aspects of mobile telephony come second to its provision of functions.

It is apparent, therefore, that the student way of life has led undergraduates to adapt mobile telephony in specific ways. It has enabling potential in that it is a new technology, but the ways in which the technology is used are highly particular. The popularity of SMS amongst Newcastle undergraduates, for example, is related to the amount of time they spend in places where making and receiving phone calls is considered inappropriate. Thus, students have shaped the technology that in turn shapes their lives. It has been argued in conjunction, however, that mobile telephony is only part of a series of changes occurring within the contemporary social environment of the university system. As the demographics of university populations begin to shift, the behaviours of students subsequently change. Students at Newcastle University were found to desire a high standard of living that the provision of credit and parental contributions can largely support. For those in genuine financial need, however, exclusion is a real possibility, not necessarily from studying for a degree, but from embracing the contemporary 'student experience'. Having and using a mobile phone is part of that experience.

## 9.3 Project Overview

Chapter 1 introduced the reader to the general area of study, presenting the structure of the thesis, and summarising key findings and concepts to be presented and explored in further detail in subsequent chapters. Reasons for conducting the research were explained, as was the choice of population studied.

Authors of, and approaches to the social science of telephony and technology, university students and 'youth' were evaluated in Chapter 2. This chapter identified

important gaps in existing research, and also provided a conceptual framework underpinning the research.

Chapter 3 explored the theoretical framework in further detail, and evaluated the choice and application of research methods used in the study. It described how a proportion of the undergraduate population at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne was studied, using a combination of the survey method, interviews and participant observation. Particular attention was paid to the detail of the everyday lives of the students concerned; this proved to be crucial in understanding their relationship with mobile telephony.

Background data crucial to the topic was presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Viewing how telephony has been used over time in the UK, with particular reference to the introduction of mobile telephony, both highlights the importance of communication technology in people's lives, and the importance of viewing this in cultural context. Similarly, the specific nature of student life is viewed as crucial to the thesis, and this historical overview not only revealed key similarities and differences between university populations over time, but also began to present the case for a specific 'student lifestyle', which is later shown to be highly influential in how students use and understand mobile phones.

Chapter 6 is an in-depth exploration of the behaviours and attitudes of the undergraduate population studied. It became necessary, during the research process, to channel the study further into this arena, as it became clear that the role of mobile telephony in student lives was not merely linked to their status as young people or UK citizens, but was also inextricably part of contemporary student life for traditional-entry students at the University of Newcastle. This chapter explored behaviours and attitudes in relation to areas such as going out, studying, family, friendships, living arrangements and finances. It also posited that these components had contributed to the emergence of a 'core' set of behaviours enacted by the undergraduates studied, which were later linked to mobile phone use in the main thesis findings.

Chapter 7 focused more specifically on the role of mobile telephony in student lives. Adoption rates, use patterns and meanings relating to mobile phones were presented in the form of data from the survey, interviews and observation. This chapter focused on

the popularity of mobile telephony, the high levels of usage and the importance of mobile phones within student lives.

*Why* mobile phones are so important to students was explored more fully in Chapter 8. This chapter explained the role of mobile telephony in student lives in terms of the undergraduate population studied, existing research and the theoretical framework employed by the study. It demonstrated how the changing nature of undergraduate life at the University of Newcastle, wider socio-economic changes in the UK university system and the introduction of mobile telephony have intertwined to produce specific communicative behaviours amongst the population studied.

## 9.4 Project Implications

There are various implications that can be drawn from the research contained within the thesis. On a general level, the project highlights the lack of study of university students by social scientists (the next section suggests how this may be rectified). The lack of research *per se* on university undergraduates, their behaviours and attitudes, needs and wants, is particularly crucial at this time. Changes in student funding have taken place without in-depth research as to their consequences. The analysis of student life contained within this thesis suggests that these changes are helping to maintain a way of being a student that continues to focus on the consumption of certain goods and services; a lifestyle that is perpetuated by the demographics of the undergraduate population, but that can be expensive to maintain. The desire to 'go away' to university, and become involved in the 'student experience', is the key marketable aspect of student life. Having a university place, and enough money to provide food and shelter, is not the only concern for the majority of students entering the university system. This has implications for policy, in that the abolition of grants and the provision of student loans helps support and perpetuate the 'traditional' student lifestyle, whilst ensuring that others are excluded from it. Similarly, interest-free overdrafts are enabling a higher standard of living than ever for many students, possibly at the expense of helping those who are in greater financial need. The importance of full participation in the contemporary student experience is costly and alternative ways of being a student, which do not revolve around the consumption of leisure and pleasure, are not receiving support. Possible changes by universities

themselves and the venues that cater to students may adjust this scenario; however, it may be possible that student life has irrevocably altered within just a few years.

The research has also revealed aspects regarding the University of Newcastle itself, and has the potential to affect the way it provides certain services for students – for example, the way it allocates accommodation, and the provision of telephony for students in this accommodation. It is recognised, however, that these issues are again related to wider socio-economic decisions regarding university funding. Once again it is reified that a university is not merely about academic education, but has further reaching implications for the social and pastoral aspects of young peoples' lives.

In terms of telephony, this research may confound critics who believe that young people do not 'need' portable or personal telephony, or use it in unsuitable ways. This thesis recognises the importance of telephony for social and emotional support, but also reveals the other practical needs that university students experience. That the nature of student life requires physical and social isolation from the rest of society is a tradition, described in Chapter 5, which has rarely been questioned. Alternatives to 'going away' to university do exist, such as residing at home and online learning, but these do not allow integration with the rest of the 'student community'. This community has existed in history for centuries, and its detachment from the rest of society has been little changed until recent years. Now, as student and youth cultures collide, and mobile telephony enables increased interaction with both the internal and external world, the importance of connecting the redbrick environment with society in general may be recognised.

Again, the various modes of utility found in mobile telephony by students have implications for the communications sector itself. For university students, mobiles are not just a toy; they are personal, ordering, connecting tools that they may utilise for the rest of their lives. Within mobile phone studies, wireless communication has been perceived as something 'extra' to the wired telephone. Research on students reveals the role of mobile telephony as the main form of non-face-to-face communication. Further research in this area may be useful to the communications industry, particularly as students are a sector moving away from teen behaviours to adulthood.

This thesis has argued that the nature of student life has recently experienced an increased rate of change; this in itself requires further research. In its current form,

however, the data on the behaviours and needs of students at the University of Newcastle offers information that may be of use to various bodies, including students themselves, or those that will become students. The research clearly offers valuable information regarding student behaviours and attitudes, which could benefit the academic community, universities themselves, and those who formulate higher education policy and student finance packages. A sociological assessment of the everyday lives of undergraduate students has especial implications for policy. For example, government officials and higher education institutions have access to data about the role of class in university admissions, but are likely to have little idea regarding the implication of this for the successful social integration of students. Demographic variables have previously been explored in terms of admissions or qualifications, but this study has demonstrated that factors such as income, place of residence and access to mobile telephony, when explored in a lived student context, also have the potential to widely affect one's experience of university.

## 9.5 Project Evaluation

As Chapter 3 discusses, the research process encountered various problems. The majority of these are related to researching a new topic, with varying skill, in an alien environment, and are common to every research project. Some aspects, however, are worthy of further discussion, and may impact on how future mobile phone research is conducted.

Firstly, behaviours associated with mobile telephony have been found difficult to observe via traditional research methods, including observation. How and why people use mobile phones is thus something that needs to be discussed with users themselves. To ensure that their descriptions are understood and make sense to the researcher, however, the observation and understanding of the daily lives and behaviours of the population studied are extremely important. It is therefore paramount to ascertain that access to this information is possible, and to include it as part of the project data.

Studying students themselves could potentially be a problem to someone not aware of their general behaviours and language. Traditional-entry students have been little studied, and the similarities and differences between 'student' and 'youth' categories can be difficult to identify. It can be difficult to socialise with undergraduates if you

are not one of them; if covertly trying to be 'one of them', ethical problems occur, and, regardless, mature students are persistently excluded from traditional-entry coteries.

If a similar study were to be conducted – and revisiting the population would no doubt be interesting, as Section 9.6 suggests – there are various improvements that could be made. First of all, identifying the nature of the population and the problems of learning about students would be a prerequisite. Assumptions regarding access would need to be evaluated. Secondly, the difficulty of presenting a coherent picture of the relationship of a population to a relatively new technology would need to be considered. The survey method did provide a wealth of data but the rapid change in communicative behaviours was not captured by the questionnaire alone. It was necessary to revisit the population at various times to be aware of the increasing popularity of mobile telephony over the time period studied. Further improvement to the quality of the data may have been achieved by the implementation of a 'logging' method, with all students recording all of their usage of mobile telephony, for example by calling to a 'freephone' number after use. The cost and practicality of this is likely to have been problematic within the scope of this project, as may the sheer volume of usage demonstrated by some students, but its provision of a record of call *length* as well as frequency and cost would have been beneficial to the project. Alternatively, participation by mobile phone service providers in similar research could provide information regarding calls and texts made from and specific mobiles (with permission of the owner), to ensure accurate and convenient logging.

The research also stresses the importance of conducting empirical research rather than relying on anecdotal evidence, and of combining qualitative aspects with statistical analysis. Viewing the quantitative data in isolation would have painted only part of the usage picture for students; similarly, viewing usage patterns outside of the general context of student lives would have resulted in a partial representation of the relationship between mobile telephony and undergraduates.

In terms of future research (discussed below), this study might be added to by exploring the communicative behaviours of teenagers before they go to university, and following graduation. The usage of wired telephony by adolescents has also been under-researched. As telephony undergoes a transitional period, and mobile devices take on increasing importance for the younger generations, the use of the traditional telephone should still be taken into account. In terms of the undergraduate population

at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, it was frustrating not to be able to compare mobile use with that of fixed line use, which remains non-visible in most situations. It would also have been useful to conduct a similar study amongst 18 to 24 year old professionals, to see whether their usage differed, and if so, why[1].

The study has overall, however, been a successfully conducted research project yielding important results. Problems encountered throughout its duration have been overcome, and the ideas that have emerged in hindsight for further improvement provide interesting areas for future research, as the next section demonstrates.

## 9.6 Ideas for Future Research

As mobile telephony remains a little researched area, the potential for further study is high. Applying the methods used in this study to other populations, or engaging in further research of the student/youth populations would produce a wealth of interesting data.

Viewing different types of students than those studied – for example mature and part-time students, or those at other universities with access to private, wired phones in Halls – would both provide another layer of information, and perhaps confirm that mobile phone use is directly related to behaviours and needs within the university context. The research in the thesis also gives rise to questions about teens' usage of mobile telephony. Teenagers at school are represented as having little 'real' need for mobile telephony, and are shown to use it on a symbolic, social basis. At first glance the same might have been said for the university students, thus a thorough analysis of the everyday lives of teenagers within UK society may further illuminate their use patterns.

One of the key aspects regarding student use of mobile phones that differs from existing representations of use by other populations is the tenuous boundary between work and leisure activities that operates within the university context. Mobile telephony is shown within the thesis to be crucial in ordering the messy separation

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[1] One of the informants, Jack, had taken time out from University to work in industry and used his mobile in slightly different ways to the other students, which suggests that this would be an interesting avenue.

between these conceptual areas. It would thus be interesting to explore the role of telephony, and mobile telephony, in other populations with similarly malleable boundaries – such as teleworkers (for which preliminary research exists), shift workers, and those who do not work. The findings from this thesis also have implications for the conclusions drawn from research on gender – it is highly possible that communicative behaviours attributed to 'women' are connected to their leisure/work schedules and their domestic role within the home, rather than their gender. Further avenues to be explored would thus necessarily include categories such as 'gender', ethnicity, and possibly age, but one would have to carefully state a case as to why these variables might affect people's use of telephony.

Having adopted an anthropological approach, it would be useful to conduct further empirical evidence to provide a direct cross-cultural comparison between young people in different cultural arenas, such as the university and employment, or the UK and other European countries. Existing research, as described in Chapter 2, relies on a variety of methods, and thus comparison is difficult; it is also hindered by non-anthropological assumptions that a population's behaviours can be identified by their country of residence and supposed national culture. As Roos (1994) demonstrates, what applies to cultural behaviour does not necessarily apply to telephony; Finns are taciturn in co-present communication, but use their mobiles enthusiastically and extensively. The role of ethnicity *within* as well as *between* populations is also under-researched, and may be found, in future research, to be an influential factor in the adoption and use of technology.

Given the relatively recent availability of mobile phones for young people, it would seem important to study a student population in one or two years hence, to note any changes within student behaviour, with specific attention paid to communicative behaviour. The population explored by this study did not usually use mobile telephony prior to attending university, thus their use of mobile phones may differ from that of teens who go to university having already constructed their own set of communicative behaviours, that may or may not be adapted differently within the university context.

Another area for future research may be that of the mobile phone as a private communicative instrument, useful in creating and maintaining intimate relationships. Although popular within the student population specifically, due to problems accessing

private, wired telephony, it is possible that other members of the UK population also find the mobile phone key in this arena.

It would have been interesting to extend the study to the behaviours and opinions of the parents of the students concerned, to ask questions such as how they felt regarding their children's use of mobiles, and the role of mobile phones in connecting home to the University. In addition to the transition to independence that changes student lives and behaviours, parents are also likely to be affected, thus attempting to view the lives of family units when offspring leave to attend University would be of interest, and may contribute another layer of understanding to the role of mobile telephony enabling independence and/or interdependence.

To conclude, as well as answering a variety of research questions posed by the thesis, this study has produced a large number of questions for 'follow-up' research on the same topic and future research in similar areas.

## 9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a dual conclusion to the research process, by summarising the research process and its findings, and suggesting areas for future research.

It has revisited the key areas of interest identified by the thesis, concluding that mobile telephony for students is a mode of communication that operates on several levels, all of which are connected to contemporary aspects of the lives of traditional-entry undergraduates at the University of Newcastle. It has been noted that the recently changed and changing aspects of these lives has contributed to the popularity of mobile telephony amongst the population. In short, it has summarised the key findings from the thesis, which connect the detailed aspects of student lives to their use of mobile telephony.

The chapter has also provided suggestions for future research in the fields of both mobile/telephony, and university students. Methods and populations seen to be potentially useful in increasing understanding are described. The anthropological approach taken here, which explores the behaviours of a population and the role of technology within them, is recommended to be used elsewhere, in the absence of a comparable approach in existing studies of mobile telephony.

Finally, the research and research process has been evaluated retrospectively, providing an overview of how the thesis presents and represents the research process and research findings.

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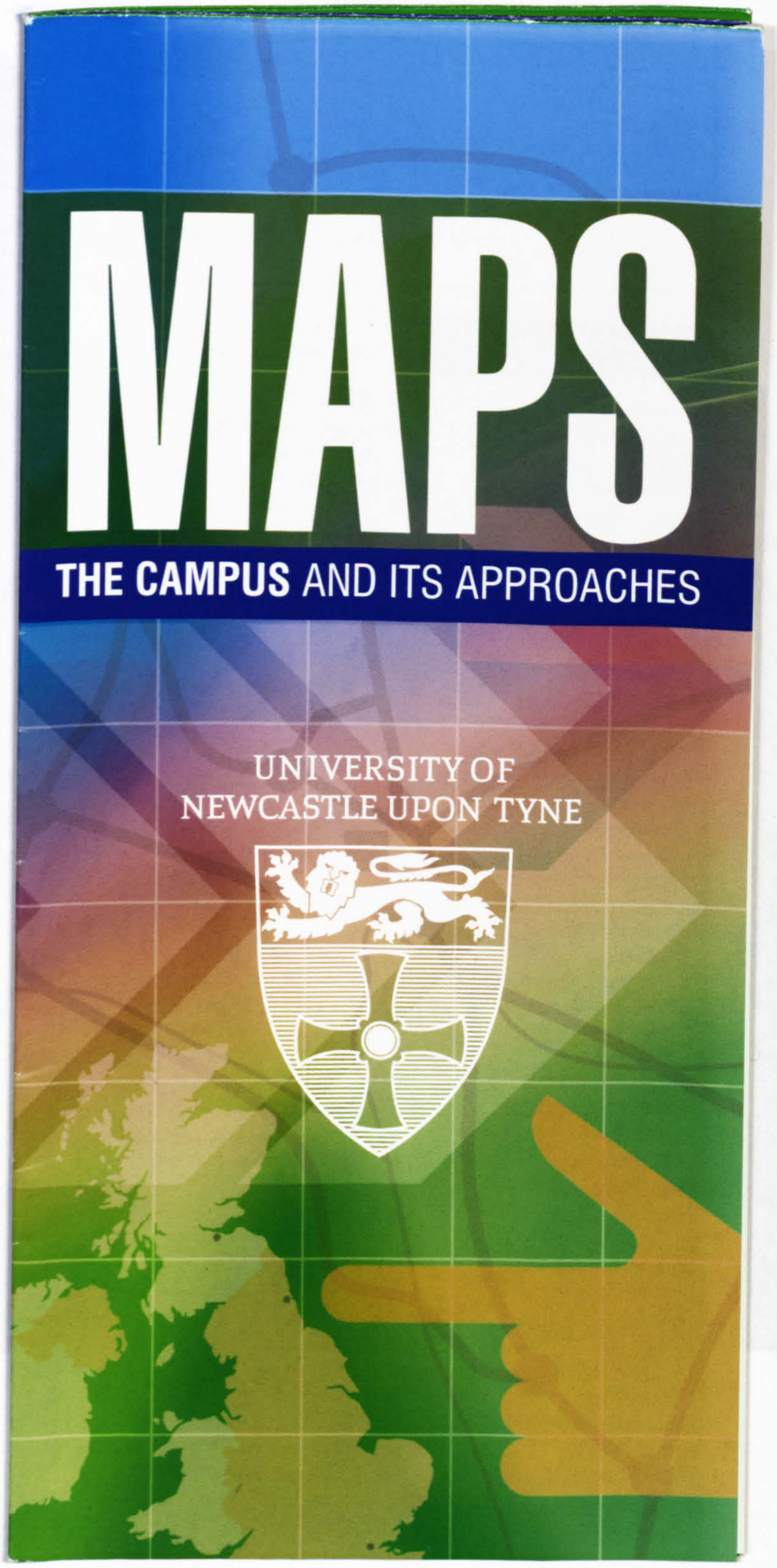
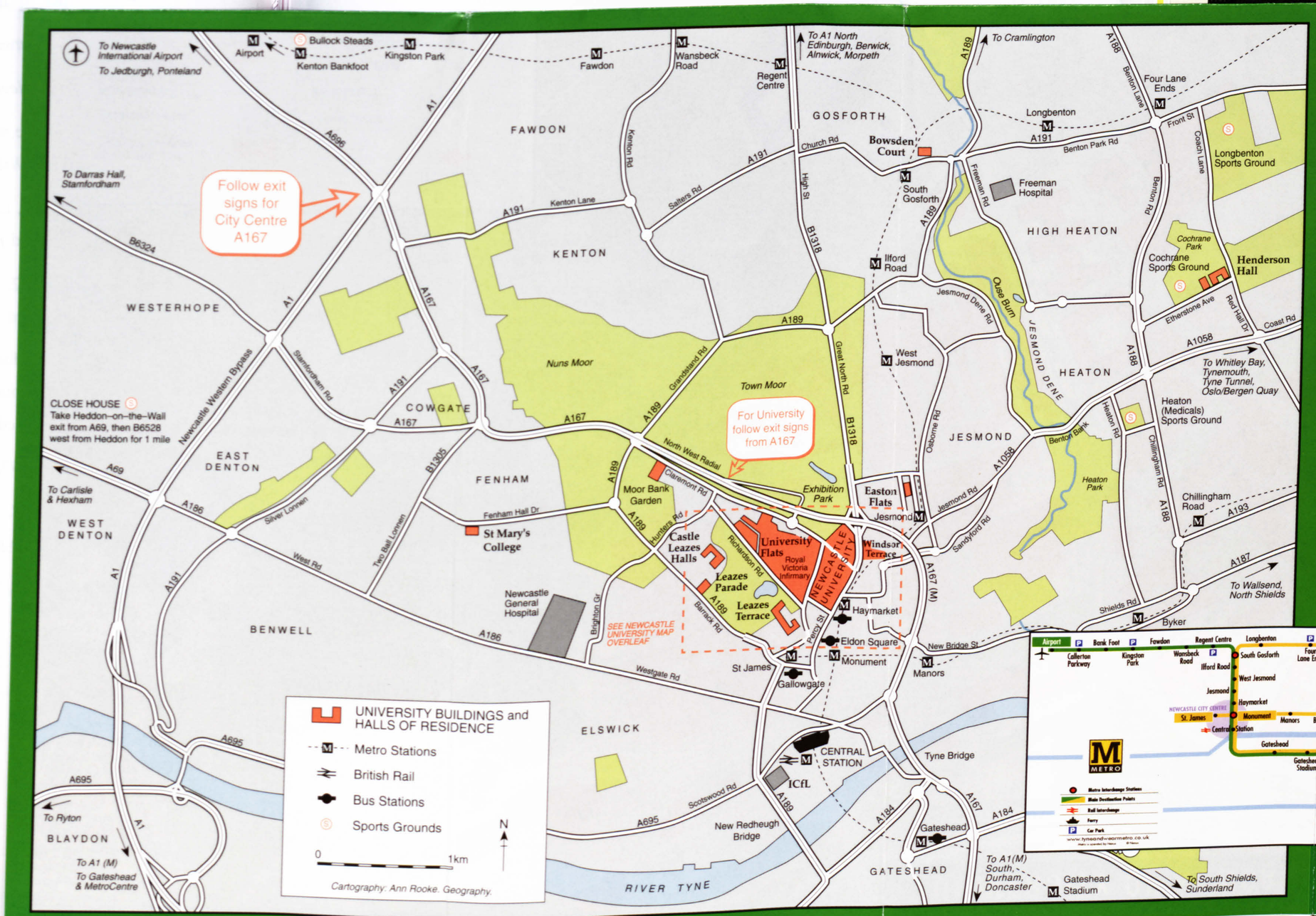
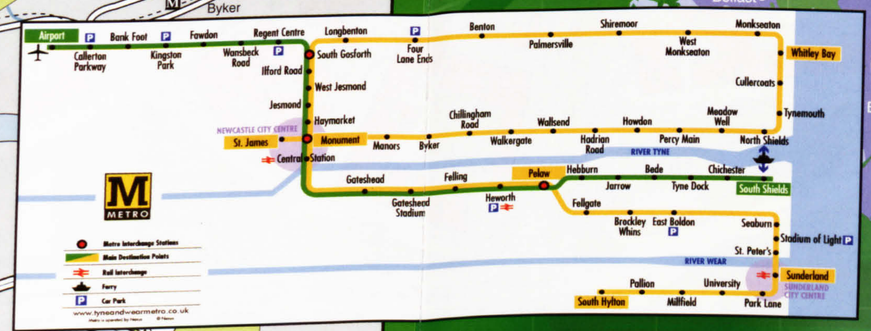
# Appendix




Newcastle University Map (fold out to read).





## Campus location map and travel directions

### BY ROAD

**Private transport:** from the north or south, follow the A1 towards Newcastle. Leave the A1 (Newcastle Western Bypass) at the junction with the A167/ A696 and follow signs for the 'City Centre'. Take the A167 exit marked 'Universities and Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI)' which brings you on to Claremont Road. The public car park on Claremont Road is only five minutes' walk away from the University's campus. Parking is ***very limited*** around the University campus itself and is not normally possible.

**Public transport:** the city's coach and bus stations, including Gallowgate, are within easy reach of the University by foot, taxi or Metro.

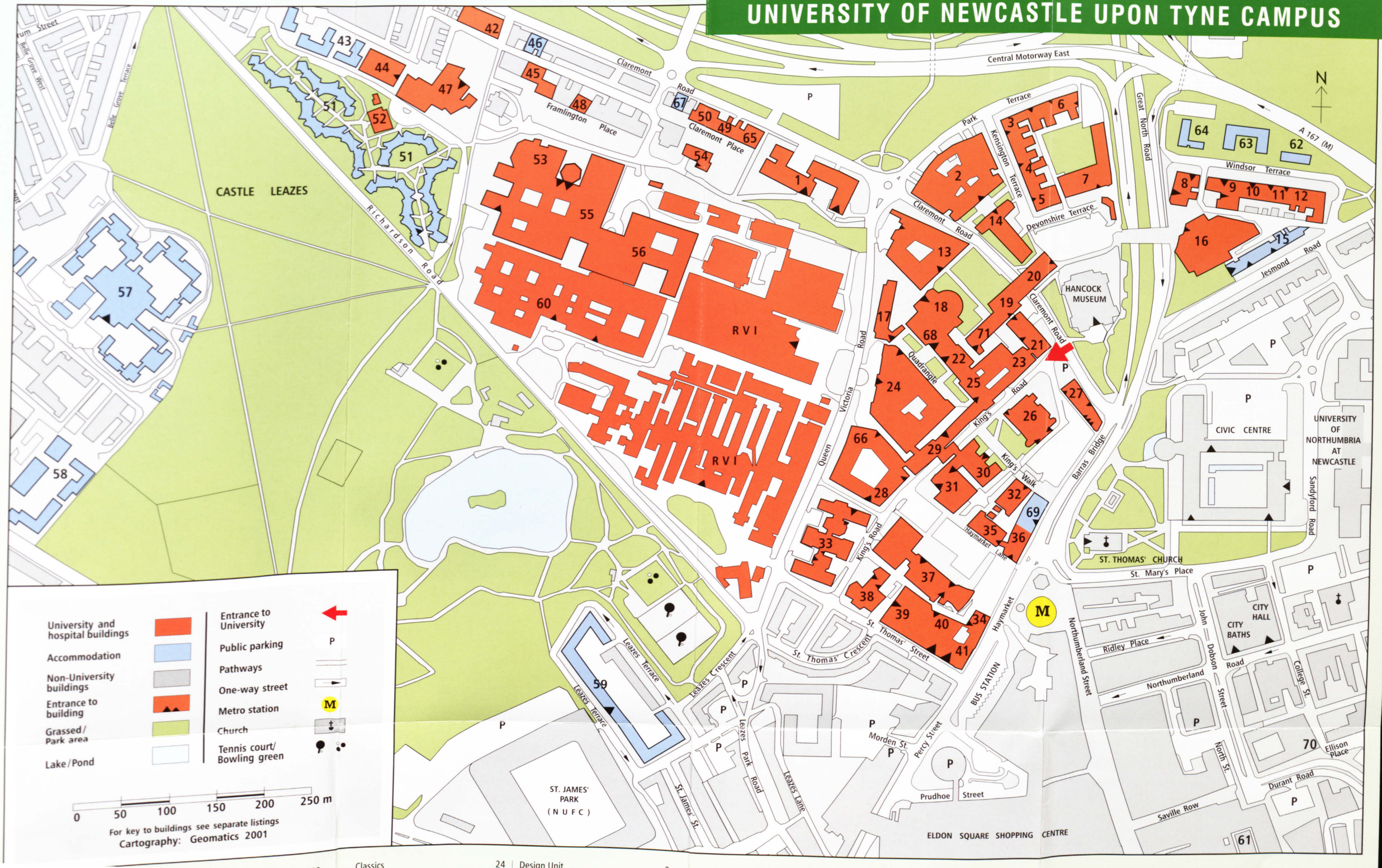
### BY PLANE

Newcastle International Airport is only about seven miles north west of Newcastle University. A taxi from the Airport will take about 15 minutes, costing approximately £10. You can also travel by Metro (rapid transit system) to the Haymarket which will take about 25 minutes and cost around £1.80. The University is adjacent to Haymarket Metro Station.

### BY RAIL

From Newcastle Central Station you can take the Metro to Haymarket (only two stops).

# UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE CAMPUS




University and hospital buildings
Accommodation
Non-University buildings
Entrance to building
Grassed / Park area
Lake / Pond

Entrance to University
Public parking
Pathways
One-way street
Metro station
Church
Tennis court / Bowling green

0 50 100 150 200 250 m

For key to buildings see separate listings

Cartography: Geomatics 2001

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 33 | Classics | 24 | Design Unit | 2 | Gulbenkian Theatre | 26 |
| | | Development & Alumni | | | | Marris House Student Flats | 43 |
| | | | | | | Psychiatry | 60 |
| | | | | | | Science, Agriculture & Engineering, Faculty Office | |

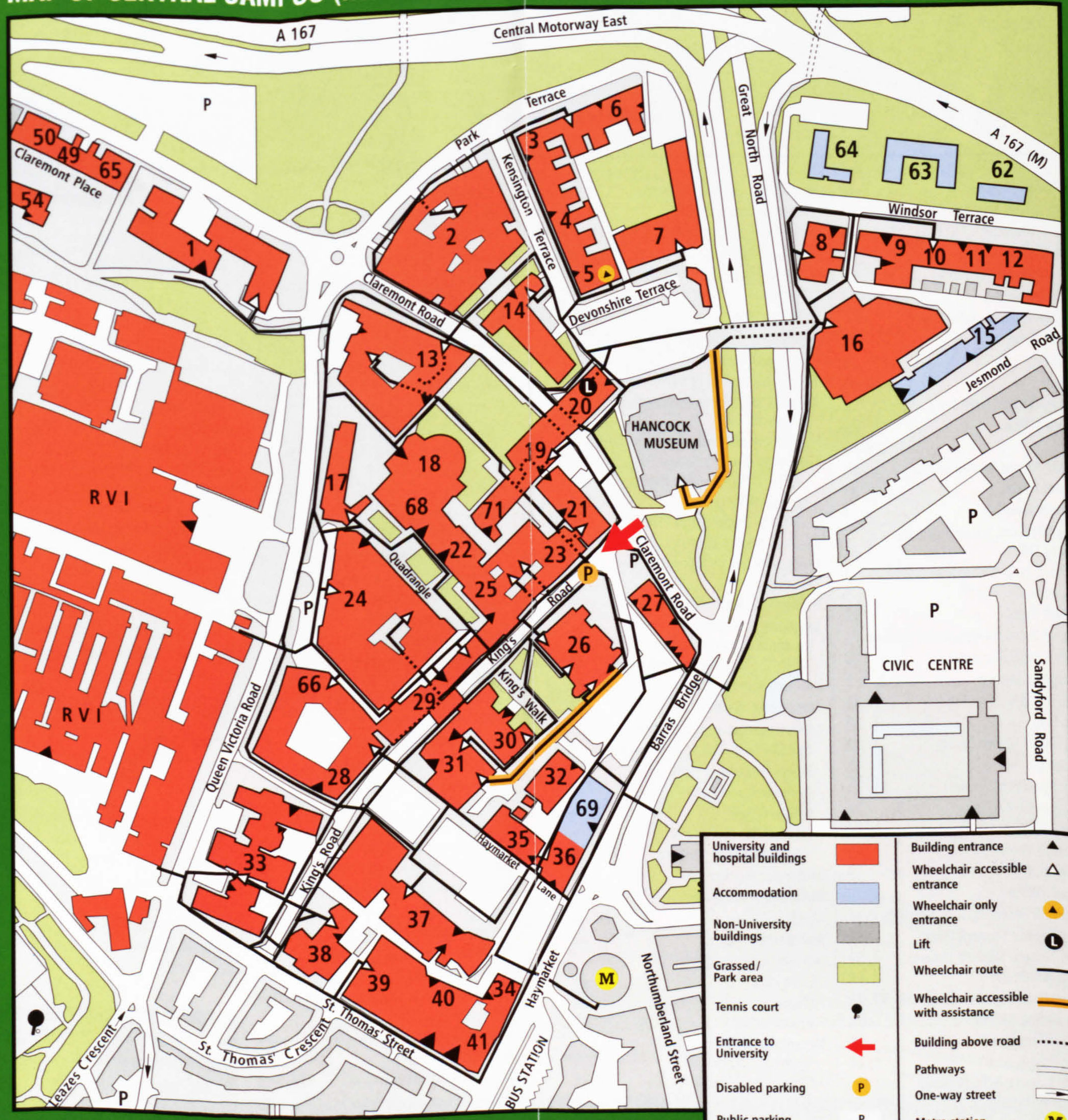

## KEY



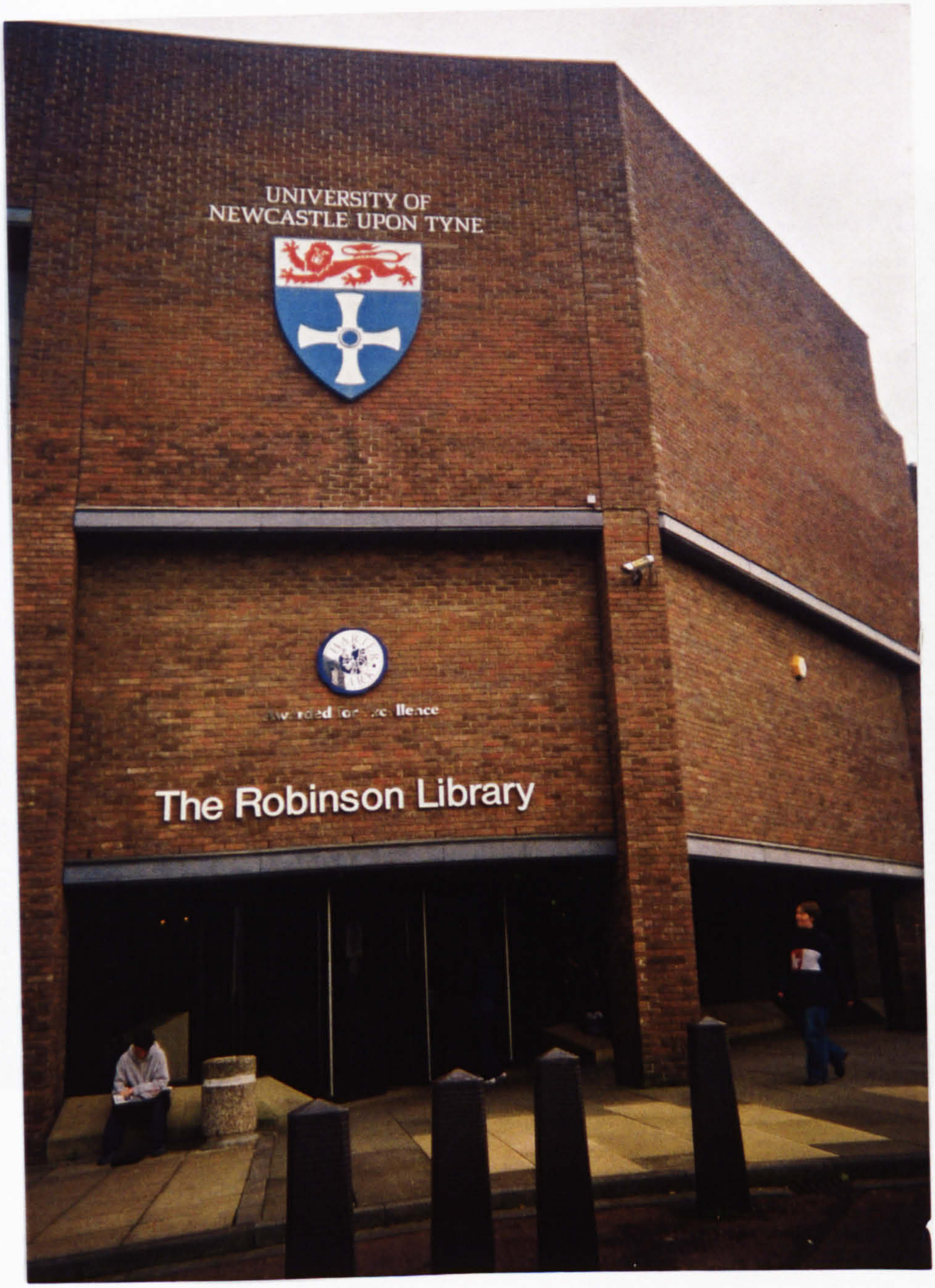
**RVI** refers to the Royal Victoria Infirmary. **NGH, FH** and **ICfL** refer respectively to the Newcastle General Hospital, Freeman Hospital and International Centre for Life which are not shown on this map (see Campus Location Map).

Map (fold out to read).

# MAP OF CENTRAL CAMPUS (INCLUDING WHEELCHAIR ROUTE)




See key to buildings overleaf.




The Robinson Library, Newcastle University


The Quadrangle, Newcastle University

The Union Building, Newcastle University

## Details of Individuals

This section of the appendix presents an overview of the undergraduates interviewed in the thesis, who they are and what they are like as individuals, before situating them in more general terms as part of the large group of students who constitute the undergraduate population. The profiles below need to be understood as partial, condensed representations of the people concerned, who in reality are undoubtedly more complex individuals than it is possible to convey in a series of sentences. It should also be noted that the individuals are shown in the ethnographic present, captured in time at the age they were during interview; some were first years at the outset of the project, and many have subsequently graduated.

**Lucie** is an absolute livewire who rarely stops talking and gets excited about everything; she has a habit of forgetting what she's going to say next. She's nineteen and attends a fee-paying school before attending Newcastle University. Just entering her second year of a Dentistry degree, she lives with a houseful of other dentists in Heaton who she describes as 'boring boring boring!', relaying their prime interests are buying designer clothes and watching their weight. Lucie's prime interests are going out, going out, and going out. She loves to get drunk. She spends 'far too much money' going clubbing on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays and sometimes Tuesdays and Thursdays and Sundays. (She generally stays in on a Saturday night.) Lucie is worried about her £1800 overdraft and has just started a bar job in Jesmond in an attempt to help pay off her debts. She also works in her local pub outside of termtime.

**Jude** is a 20 year old medical student in the third year of his degree. It can be difficult to establish a rapport with him – he appears to takes things quite seriously. He lives with other Medics in private accommodation in the Fenham area of the city (and has previously lived in Gosforth and Heaton.) Outside of termtime he lives with his family in Greater Manchester. He attended a fee-paying school prior to attending Newcastle University. He owns a car, receives a parental allowance of £200 per month spending money, and has investments in stocks and shares. All of his friends at Newcastle University are medical students and he goes to MedSoc every Friday night. He is also in touch with friends at other universities. Now he is in his third year Jude doesn't go clubbing like he used to; he just goes to a few pubs and bars instead on a night out. His

workload is quite heavy with hospital 'rotations' but he treats it 'like a job'. Jude also belongs to the Territorial Army and enjoys running to keep fit. He is not much of a drinker, which he puts down to having previously over-indulged and seeing a friend 'turning into an alcoholic.' Neither is he in a relationship. Jude sees a difference between student life, which he perceives as varied and lacking responsibility, and adult life, which he views as a time of being 'in control'.

**Rebecca** describes herself as a 'down to earth Yorkshire lass' – she's full of fun and completely unpretentious. A 24 year old Dentistry student about to enter her final year, she is single and lives in private accommodation in Heaton with other dental students. Becky attended a non-fee paying school before starting at Newcastle and returns outside of termtime to live with her parents in a small Yorkshire village. Most of her friends are other dental students and she enjoys attending DentSoc. She also works at the Medicals' Rugby Club on a Saturday night and goes out socialising with them afterwards. Rather than the regular clubbing of her early years at University, Becky now prefers more upmarket bars and those in Jesmond. Becky has about £200 spending money per month and takes her finances very seriously, justifying every expenditure. She doesn't see herself as a 'typical student' because her long and regular working hours call for a lifestyle that cannot involve weeknight socialising

**Francesca** is a pleasant, likeable student. She's just finished the first year of a Combined Studies course. Before starting her course at Newcastle she attended an independent school with an excellent reputation, and spent a gap year working and travelling. Fran lives in Jesmond with three other female students and one male student in a shared house. Lots of their friends live nearby on the next two streets. Franc enjoyed socialising on Osborne Road whilst she was living in Halls, and still regularly goes out to the bars there. She and her friends are also enjoying being able to socialise in their rented house. Fran says she doesn't know how people coped at University without mobile phones.

**Phillippa** looks and sounds 'posh', but is extremely down to earth. She cannot be described as sensible however – even though she takes enormous pains with her study, she's really bad with money. She has a boyfriend who attends Bristol University, and conducts a long distance relationship which requires great effort to maintain as she is in her final year of study. Phillippa lives in a shared rented house just outside of Jesmond; she and her friends still enjoy socialising in that area. Last year she lived with 8 other people, male and female, in a house; now she shares with the 4 women and the 6 men also

live nearby in a shared house. Before attending University, Phillippa worked and travelled during a gap year. She says that she and her friends go clubbing much less than they did in previous years, but now increased workload is partially responsible. Phillippa receives £400 per month from her parents, who also pay her rent, and also has student loans an interest-free overdraft.

**Imogen** comes across as quite naïve, enthusiastic and eager; she's only nineteen and about to enter her second year of study in Biological Sciences. She came to Newcastle from a state school background and during termtime lives with her parents in Surrey. Imogen shares a house with four other women in Jesmond and has just returned from a month's holiday abroad. She is a huge football fan. Imogen goes clubbing three times a week (during the week) and sometimes goes to the cinema or casino on a Saturday as well. She pays for her rent from her student loan, receives a £200 monthly allowance from her parents and has a job during the holidays.

**Isobel** is an unassuming twenty-two year old coming towards the end of her Dentistry degree. Outside of termtime she lives with her parents at home in Cheshire. She went to a state school and sixth form college, and doesn't have a job. Isobel lives out with other dental students in privately rented accommodation in the suburb of Jesmond. She finds her course quite hard work and is particularly fed up now during her fourth year of study that she can't go out and get drunk during the week because it's not conducive to wielding a dentist's drill the next day. In her first year she went out nearly every night with a variety of people. Now most of the people she knows also study Dentistry and only socialise at the weekends. Whereas she used to go clubbing to Ritzy during the week and get as drunk as she could, now Isobel just has a few [alcoholic] drinks in a bar of she does go out and settles for getting drunk with other dentists on a Friday night. Isobel has a boyfriend back in Cheshire that she sees outside of termtime and some weekends during termtime. She also keeps in touch with other friends from home. Her parents pay her rent and she has a spending allowance of £335 per month which she spends on going out, clothes, food and magazines and always ends up in debt (she has an overdraft of £1800 and spent four student loans.) As a qualified dentist, Isobel expects a starting salary of £20,000 so is not currently worried about running up debts. She sees a clear divide between the 'rigid' nature of adult life and the more spontaneous life of being a student.

**Michael** is a confident Architecture student in his fifth year of study. He is 22 and in a relationship with somebody else at the University. Educated at an independent school,

Michael lives with his parents in Warwickshire outside of termtime, and during termtime shares a flat with one other person in Jesmond. Mike has £205 per month to spend after his rent is paid. He works long, erratic hours in a studio at the University and has recently completed a year in industry. Mike has several 'important relationships' with friends from school who do not attend Newcastle University. Most of his friends are architecture students and he also plays hockey. He remembers Freshers' Week as 'a bit of a blur' and enjoyed going to clubs and pubs during his early years at University. Now Mike prefers quieter Quayside bars and his local in Jesmond although he has recently rediscovered the Union bars.

**Leo** is a 22 year old male Engineering student at Newcastle University in his final year of study. Single, Leo lives with other Newcastle students in private accommodation in Gosforth. Outside of termtime he lives with his family in Lancashire. He has £160 per month to live on and has a games console and a laptop computer. Leo is currently in the middle of his final exams, after which he is going on holiday to Tenerife with friends. After graduating he will go to work in the automobile industry. Now he's in his fourth year of study, Leo is no longer interested in the cheapest alcohol offers and a life of 'pandemonium' but instead enjoys going to his local pub and taking part in the pub quiz or watching football there – he's a big football fan. Leo perceives a difference between student life and working life – working life provides regular routine, and 'weekends are...much more like weekends.'

**Chris** has a noticeable Northern accent. He lives in a spacious, three-storey house in West Jesmond with three housemates. Currently in the 3rd year of his Architecture degree, Chris is planning to work overseas next year for his placement in industry. He enjoys travelling and playing music, which he finds provides relief from the stresses of his degree. Chris is particularly close to his Mum – he calls himself a 'Mummy's boy' and also has a good relationship with his Dad. Socially, he enjoys going to the pub to watch football, and still enjoys clubbing but not to the extent he did during his first year.

**Kirsty** is earnest and hardworking. Her life revolves around her boyfriend, who lives in York; she sees him every weekend. Kirsty is a 19 year old student beginning the second year of a Linguistics degree. She lives in Jesmond with friends. Her parents pay her rent and tuition fees, and supply her with a monthly allowance of £270. She has two part-time jobs during termtime. Her social life is mainly spent with her boyfriend, at weekends, and at bars in Jesmond during the week. (In the first year she would go clubbing on a Monday

and Wednesday and to the Union on a Friday.) Kirsty also has lots of friends at other universities. She is very close to her Mum, and to her boyfriend's family.

**Joshua** is a highly individual person with committed spiritual and political beliefs. He is a 19 year old second year student studying for a Joint Honours degree in Maths and Geography. He lives in private accommodation near to the University but wants to live in Jesmond. Outside of termtime Joshua chooses not to return to the family home but stays in Newcastle or travels – he has just returned from a month travelling around Europe. Joshua went to a state school before going to Newcastle. His main interests are 'good guitar music' and reading. He also attends Buddhist meditation. He does not believe in television although he enjoys the show 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer.' Joshua is a big football fan. He prefers going to live music gigs than clubbing, and thinks the Union is 'tacky'. He prefers 'real ale' pubs. He refuses to conform to the behaviours demonstrated by most students although he is not averse to attending the odd student party. He wears a beanie (woollen hat) and flares, and often speaks about his left-wing and environmentally-concerned political views. He's a very chatty, friendly person. Joshua's Mum pays his rent and he has a student loan for the rest of his expenses. He no longer has a holiday job as he was sacked for incompetence. He doesn't spend much money on clothes. Joshua's friends and colleagues identify him with 'typical' students of an earlier era and perceive him as an anomaly – as he states, confused, "I look at every single person at this university I've ever met and not one of them is like me."

**Michelle** is a local student from nearby Ashington who lives with her parents and brother. She is 21 and had two years out working before she started university – one doing voluntary work overseas, and one working in a local Benefits Agency. She has a local boyfriend (of four years standing) and attended a non-fee paying school before university. Michelle doesn't socialise with many university students, but enjoys going out in Newcastle with her local friends. She has a part-time job as a student support assistant at a local college. She is studying for a Psychology degree and has found it harder than she expected. Michelle does not pay rent and her parents give her an allowance for her bus fares to Newcastle, lunches in University, and clothing. Her other expenses are covered by the wages from her part-time job. Michelle enjoys going out to the Northumberland countryside at weekends.

**Rafael** is the eldest of four brothers. He is 20 and a second year Economics student at Newcastle University. He attended a non-fee paying school before going to Newcastle

and has a girlfriend who also attends the University. Raf has recently begun working weekends in a shop in Newcastle as his parents are experiencing some financial problems. Because of work he no longer goes to the Union on a Friday night. He still goes clubbing twice during the week however. He has also been attending lots of house parties and has found his second year 'wilder' than his first year. He lives in private accommodation in Sandyford with five other people. Raf spends a lot of time with his girlfriend, both at his house, her house and in University.

**Stephen** lives with his parents and brother in the town of Chester-le-Street in County Durham. He studies Chemistry at the University, and is currently in his second year. As he lives with his parents he does not pay any rent and earns living expenses from his part-time job at a local leisure centre. Stephen attended the local comprehensive and sixth-form college prior to going to Newcastle University and retains a lot of friends in the local area. He does not socialise with anyone else from the University, although he sometimes attends the pub crawls organised by his department. His main hobbies are buying and listening to underground dance music and going on bike rides. He also goes to local pubs and to the cinema. Stephen is currently single. Stephen has never travelled far from Chester Le Street and would like to go to visit London which he has heard has a good music scene; he is not impressed by the selection of clubs on offer in Newcastle. He doesn't like living in Chester Le Street either because he doesn't think the pubs are quiet enough. Stephen sees a large contrast between himself and non-local students at the University, which he sometimes sees as a problem, but not enough of one to change his lifestyle and make more of an effort to go out with other Newcastle undergraduates.

**Samantha** is a 20 year old undergraduate in the second year of a Social Policy degree. Before attending Newcastle she went to an independent school as a weekly boarder. She returns to her family home in Staffordshire during holidays and some weekends; she has a boyfriend who also lives in the area. Samantha's parents pay her rent and give her a financial allowance of £200 per month. She rents private accommodation in Heaton with a group of five friends and manages to avoid cooking meals, which she is notoriously bad at. (She had hoped to move to Jesmond but one of her friend's parents bought a house in Heaton for them all to live in.) She is a member of a University netball team and plays once or twice a week. Samantha enjoys buying clothes, spending £100 per month on them. In the summer holidays she works as a warehouse packer in Staffordshire which is

the same job she had on her gap year. She spends lots of time socialising, and especially enjoys going clubbing during the week.

**Alex** is fairly quiet and speaks in a deliberated fashion. He's a 19 year student beginning the second year of an Engineering course and lives in University flats in Richardson Road with five friends he made during his first year, in Halls. Alex is originally from Greater Manchester where he returns outside of termtime to live with his parents. He went to state school prior to attending Newcastle. He cannot be financially supported by his parents and relies on student loans and some money given to him by his grandparents. In his first year Alex always went to the Union to socialise but now he visits local pubs instead. He also enjoys going to live music 'gigs' and buying CDs and magazines.

**Amy** is a pretty, petite Politics student who is in her final year. She has a boyfriend also at the University, at whose house she spends most of her time, and she is a smoker. She shares a house in Heaton with two other female students. Some of her other friends live in Jesmond but Amy felt she couldn't afford it – she doesn't like getting into debt. Amy enjoys going clubbing to both venues that are popular with students and venues that are not; she does not go out as often as she used to. She is currently in the middle of exams and her dissertation, and finding it hard work. Her main social haunt is the smoking area of the library where she and her friends regularly meet. Amy belongs to the Politics Society but says that it does not have many events. She also worked on Newcastle Student Radio before her course workload prevented this.

**Abigail** puts one hundred percent into everything she does – and she does everything. Single and 21 years of age, she is a rarity amongst students who have gone away to university – a final year student not in debt, with no overdraft and no student loans. This is not because she scrimps and saves – on the contrary, she is frequently spending money. She is, however, extremely focused and has always had a very mature attitude to money. Abigail had a gap year before going to Newcastle during which she worked and saved money to help support her throughout University. She has also worked throughout the duration of her University career and put aside some of that money into a savings account; she does not return home during vacations but works instead. Abigail has just gained a first in her degree and is thinking of continuing in higher education. She describes herself as a 'disgustingly organised person'. Abigail enjoys her part-time job and frequently socialises with her co-workers, many of whom are local, going clubbing after work or on other nights out. She also has friends at the University, and lives with

two other students in Sandyford that she met through an advert after finishing a relationship with her live-in partner. She has a good relationship with her parents and brother, with whom she travelled in Europe during her last holiday. Abigail also regular works out at the University gym.

**Jack** is on a year out in industry from his Computer Studies course, and returns to his final year at University next academic year. He really enjoys his job, both in content and the financial rewards it brings. Jack has a serious girlfriend who lives with him and 4 others in a shared house near Jesmond. He enjoys spending time outside of Newcastle at weekends, returning home at least once a term. Jack loves working with computers, and spends a lot of time on the Internet – he would love to have internet access on his mobile. Due to his job, he tends to spend weeknights eating dinner and watching TV, and no longer goes out clubbing during the week. If he and his friends do go out in the week, it tends to be for a couple of drinks somewhere on Osborne Road or elsewhere in Jesmond. Jack is a football fan and likes to make sure he catches the final scores on a Saturday afternoon.

**Tom** is an Agricultural Studies student. He lives in shared private accommodation with 3 other students in Jesmond. His girlfriend lives north of Jesmond, so he spends a lot of time driving round to spend time with her. Other friends also live nearby. Tom's Dad is a farmer, and he hopes to pursue the same career path. Tom and his friends regularly have 'house parties' and the place is often messy. He is having difficulty applying himself to his studies, and is unable to resist the temptation of having a few beers with friends. He does state, however, that he is less of a drinker than other friends, particularly those in Agriculture. Tom attended independent school before going to Newcastle University. He used to play rugby, but injury now prevents this.

**Jodie** studies Engineering – she's in her final year and finds it extremely dull. She lives in a shared house with 4 other people in Jesmond Vale. Jodie's main commitment in life is to the Christian church, and this takes up a lot of her time. She also plays in the University women's football team and studies hard. Jodie also enjoys going out to socialise, although she does not have much time for this due to her other commitments; she does not attend Departmental pub-crawls as they are on the same night as football training. Her main ways of socialising are arranging to have lunch with others during the day on-campus. Jodie's other main interest is watching football, and she makes sure she either watches or videos [what was] Match of the Day. She has a close relationship with

her family. Jodie uses both her car and her bike to travel to University and the University football ground.

**James** studies Environmental Biology. He is not good at waking up in the mornings, and as such has struggled attending his course lectures throughout the duration of his degree. Now in his final year, he wishes that he had chosen a subject of study which would interest him more. James lived in shared housing with x people in Jesmond. He attended an independent school before Newcastle University and insists he is not a 'Sloane', criticising the insularity of some other independent school pupils he knows. James ran up large debts soon after starting University, and, as he did not wish to get a job during termtime, worked a 14 hour day on a farm during the vacation period. James has lunch with his course colleagues on a regular basis, and enjoys going out, hosting house parties, and having evenings in front of the TV. Everyone in his house takes it in turns to prepare a proper evening meal, and a roast dinner on Sundays. They enjoy inviting friends round for supper on regular basis. James has a girlfriend who also lives in Jesmond.

**Jessica** studies English, loves reading and works on The Courier in the reviews section. She attended a state school, and worked in a hospital during her gap year. She lives with 4 other female students in a shared house in Jesmond. Jessica smokes, and preferred that she was not interviewed in her house as it is 'a pigsty!' Outside of termtime she works in her local pub in Cambridge, and during termtime is employed by the Union. Jessica largely supports herself through University with the aid of loans, and finds it difficult to match the expenditure of her more financially solvent friends. She enjoys University life however, and until recently participated regular clubbing events. The taught elements of Jessica's degree are not extensive, and she has lots of spare time for social lunches and so on. She also enjoys spending time outside of the city centre in places such as Tynemouth.

**Interview with Phillippa Lesieur March 2001**

*NS Where do you hail from - is Lesieur a family name?
*PL It goes way back - we're not at all French anymore, sort of years and years ago we moved over to England. Very old.
*NS I'll start by asking a few questions about this place. It's just by Ilford Road metro; this is your 3rd year, so it's your second year of living out. So why did you choose to live in this area?
*PL We lived in Jesmond last year, and we didn't choose to live here, actually, we wanted to stay where we were in the middle of Jesmond, but it got too late to find a house. All the houses had gone, and this was one of the houses we saw, such a nice house and we were like, never mind, at least we'll be near the Metro, and it's not that far. Most of our friends live in the middle of Jesmond.
*NS So it's not too far. [one stop] Would you just pop on the Metro, or...
*PL Yeah, Metro. I've got a car as well, so sometimes I drive. But mostly Metro, because it's so easy. I don't walk very much. I'm quite lazy
*NS So how many rooms are there in this house?
*PL 5
*NS And 5 of you live here?
*PL Yeah
*NS And you said last year you were living with 9 in Jesmond.
*PL Yeah - 5 girls, 4 boys.
*NS can I take names for people here?
*PL Vicky, Letitia, Hannah, and Andie.
*NS So what happened to the guys then?
*PL Well there were 4 of them. We just didn't want to live in a huge 9-man house in 3rd year. And we all wanted to stay mixed actually, but when it came down to it we all wanted to go to a 4-man house, and to split the 5 of us and the 5 of them, there was another boy as well not actually living in a flat last year, it just got a bit difficult. So in the end it was just easier to go all boys and all girls, so they're all living together as well, just at the end of Osborne Road, so they're still quite close. There's 6 of them, because they live with 1 girl. Harry, Jeremy, Charles, Paul, Ed and Anna.
*NS Did you know her from before?
*PL Yeah, I knew her from before. She used to go out with one of the boys; I got introduced through one of the boys.
*NS Where do you know the rest of your housemates from?
*PL From Halls, basically. I actually met 2 of those boys travelling in my Gap year, but didn't stay in contact with them or anything, just bumped back into them in Halls, so just picked it up from there.
*NS Oh wow, what was that like that then?
*PL It was the first night of being in halls actually, just bumped back into them, so that was brilliant, and then just met the others - Hannah was in my next door room, I met Vicky on the first night, and just, didn't know any of them before. It was quite soon on in the

first year.
*NS Are any of those in Combined Studies? Did you meet any of them through your course?
*PL Halls, halls. Although, I met Andie and then found out she was doing Psychology - cos I started off my first year doing straight psychology, and then found out it was too scientific for me, so I bumped into Andie in Halls and then discovered that she was doing the same course, so I guess that was when the friendship definitely went from there, cos we went to lectures, and enrolled together and did all that kind of stuff.
*NS And you're still friends?
*PL Yeah
*NS You mentioned about a Gap year; so you didn't come straight from school. is there any particular reason for that?
*PL I'm quite young for my age, my year, [tape garbled] just didn't want to go straight to University.
*NS I was asking where you were on your Gap year?
*PL Well, I worked for the first six months at home - well, in London, in fact. Just temping, I worked for BT, Shaftesbury Avenue. [] So I got a job through an agency, actually, so I did 6 months working, and then went to South Africa, and then Australia and New Zealand and Fiji and the Cook Islands, and then a quick stop in America and then home. That was 6 months travelling. me and one school friend. It was fun, good fun. It seems like years ago.
*NS You said you worked in London, but that's not home; you live in a village.
*PL I live in a village in Sussex, yeah. I worked - I was going to work at home, live at home, but I wasn't getting much money - my pay was so low - and then a family friend of the friend I went travelling with's son, a contact of theirs whatever, had a spare room in his flat in London and said if you want to, you can live there for free rent. So I was just so lucky, we were quite lucky.
*NS And did you have a bit of a social life in London as well?
*PL Yeah, I did. A lot of people were up there. Although we didn't go out much at all just cos, otherwise we weren't gonna save anything. We went out like once a week, probably, that was about it. We were very good.
*NS So this friend from school, are you still in touch with her?
*PL Yeah, she's up in Edinburgh, so she's quite close, yeah, still very much in touch. She's called Jenny.
*NS Can I ask a bit about your school?
*PL Yes, it was a girls' independent school, in Horsham, West Sussex. [Farlington?] It was about an hour away from my house. And mainly a day school, but I was a boarder. There weren't many of us - there were about 40 boarders, I'd say. And the school was about 300/400 girls. I stayed there right till the end. I was gonna leave for the sixth form to go to co-ed, but Mum and Dad managed to persuade me to stay!
*NS How did you find it then, all girls?
*PL Fine, fine, cos I was really lucky, I had a close group of 4 or 5 girlfriends. And although most of them did leave, in the end, I did want to leave but I saw the

sense in staying. Particularly what I wanted to do, Theatre Studies A-level, and a lot of the boys schools that perhaps I would have gone to, didn't do that as a subject. And that was the only thing I knew I wanted to do. I got a scholarship into the sixth form, so it was money wise a much better option for my parents, so it was fine. I enjoyed it, so it was OK, not too bad.
*NS You mentioned this close-knit circle of friends, are you still close?
*PL Yeah, still fairly close. We definitely see each other in the holidays and stuff, although we're all scattered around. My friend called Amanda, who's actually graduated, she didn't take a year out, so she's back at home in Sussex; and then a girl called Emily, who's studying at Swansea University. And then Tara, who is at Canterbury. And a girl called Jasmine, who's at Bradford.
*NS So when you say that you see them in the holidays...were they daygirls?
*PL Amanda was a boarder with me, Emily was a boarder with me as well - she left for sixth form, as did Tara, who was a daygirl anyway.
*NS So you meet up with them?
*PL Yes, in the holidays, see quite a lot of them. See more of the ones I was at sixth form with - Jenny and Jasmine - just purely because we had that extra 2 years of spending time together. And all the boys we know from home are very much friends with those 3, whereas Emily and Tara I see separately, I see them on my own, cos they left sixth form so they've very much got another group of friends around home as well.
*NS So these are people that you would still see around home, even though it was a boarding school and you lived an hour away, there's still a home base.
*PL Yeah, I would have to travel an hour to see them - Amanda lives near me. Or they come to me, or whatever. But it's in the holidays.
*NS Is it quite adequately served by trains there?
*PL It is, but because they're West Sussex or Surrey, and I'm East Sussex, we drive really.
*NS Were you driving in the sixth form?
*PL Yeah, I had a car in my upper sixth. I was allowed to take it to school as well, which was quite useful. But before then no, Mum had to drop me places, or buses, or anything like that.
*NS You mentioned boys from home as well, so I'm quite interested in how you got to know them?
*PL Family friends, some of them. And then, a lot of them were from the boy's school that was close to us, and Amanda had gone to prep school with one of them, and so we got to know him, and then he introduced us, and gradually it just became a group, you got to know them really quite well. and then one of them lives very close to me at home as well.
*NS So have you got the same level of friendship that you have with the girls from school, the guys?
*PL Yeah, now we have, definitely. When I was at school, definitely closer to the girls, but since we've left school, if we all go out I know them just as well now.
*NS How many of them are there?
*PL About 4, 5 of them?

*NS Can I ask about them, cos they sound quite important.
*PL Yeah, definitely, they are, the ones that I know the best. Boyd, Jonathon, Edmund, and Lee.
*NS Are they at Uni?
*PL Yeah, they're all at Uni. All separated, yeah.
*NS Can I ask you how you keep in contact with all of these men and women during termtime?
*PL OK, well, I never write letters anymore. I used to at school. Emails, although I've got bad at emails now. Cos the only way of doing email is in Uni in the library, and if I'm there I don't have much time to sit and write a long email to each and every one of them, so telephone like, mainly, if I'm gonna ring them I try to use the landline here, or they call me. Or my mobile.
*NS Where is the landline in this house then?
*PL In the hall.
*NS It's quite a large hall as well, isn't it? Do you make a call in there, or do you take the phone...
*PL Yeah, sitting on the steps, or out there, depending wherever everyone else is; if there are people watching TV then it's fine just sitting out there. If no one's in here, people sort of bring it in here [sitting room.] Or I get people to call back on my mobile and just sit in my room.
*NS Are they quite happy to do that?
*PL No, not always! Amanda will cos she's at home, so she's on her parents' phone. Others won't, but I have free minutes on my Vodafone, after 7, so anyone else that's Vodafone I can call free after 7, although not many of them actually are Vodafone, having said that.
*NS And have any of them got landlines in their Uni houses?
*PL Yeah, that's the other thing, they've all got landlines, so I will ring - like Emily, I rang the other day, she's got a landline in Swansea, so I ring her either from that phone [fixed] or my mobile, cos I get free minutes. I try not to phone mobile to mobile, especially during the middle of the day.
*NS Why?
*PL Cost! I'm trying to cut down my bills.
*NS Well, yeah - I don't know what they're like now, but in March 2000 it was very expensive.
*PL I can tell you why that was. My boyfriend's in Bristol, and he is, was Cellnet at the time, so it was unavoidable calls that were just building up and up and up and that's - now, my last bill was £60, I've got it down a lot. But still, that was good £60, it still averages about £100. But he's now changed to Vodafone, so that's why that's gone down.
*NS But you're still making £60 worth of calls outside of your free minutes per month?
*PL Yeah, which is quite a lot.
*NS Is your boyfriend in Bristol at Uni?
*PL Yeah, at UWe {?} rather than Bristol, but...University of the West of England. he's called Stephen
*NS So he was the reason for the huge bills!
*PL Definitely!
*NS It's interesting...with everybody else, you seem to analyze, and think 'this would cost too much, so I'll

ring him on the landline', but...
*PL He didn't have a landline in his flat last year; he doesn't this year either. Anyway, my only option was to call the mobile. And actually anyway, even if he did have a landline, I think it is something about if you're ringing your boyfriend just to go on the mobile - cos it's, I will call him during the day wherever I am, do you know what I mean, if it's just suddenly, I'm walking somewhere, or I'm bored or I've just been...I don't know, just little things that you just want to tell him, I will quickly pick up the phone, even if it's just a 2 minute conversation. But that will build up, obviously.
*NS So you were going out with him last March, how long have you been going out for?
*PL A year and a half now.
*NS And how did you get to know him?
*PL I met him travelling, but didn't go out with him at all; kept really good friends with him, then met up, saw him in the holidays and stuff, and then got together the summer after my first year.
*NS Does he come up to visit, and you go down there at all?
*PL Yeah, as often as we can. It works out - I've been down this term, since January, I've been down there twice, two weekends, and he's been up here once, so it works out twice a month, about that. It used to be more. It's more work now, and I'm getting more and more broke as university life goes on. But yeah, it's cut down quite a lot cos of work, I think.
*NS So has your phone used increased, or has it stayed the same though you see each other less?
*PL I suppose increased in a sense that like, when I'm not with him I'll be making more calls. But not day to day. I'll make more one day - it's pretty average, day to day, how many calls.
*NS So he's in his third year too, and would you travel down on the train, or are you going to be driving?
*PL Train. Book in advance.
*NS So how often do you speak to him?
*PL A day? I'll probably about, 4 times a day. That will be during the day, a couple of minutes here and there, just to ask something or whatever. I can't think of an exact example. And then the main conversation will be in the evening, in the free minutes.
*NS So you would wait until 7 o'clock?
*PL Yeah
*NS How long would that take?
*PL It depends what each of us are doing. If we're both not doing much and chatty, it can be up to 20 minutes. About that.
*NS What about these friends from home, school, whatever; how often do you call them, and how long for?
*PL I speak to some of them more than others. I speak to Amanda about once a week, although recently it's probably been a bit more than that. Actually, I don't speak to the others - I speak to Jenny, I don't actually speak to the others that much, perhaps once, twice a term, actually. Purely because it's time as well, to sit down and make...cos I don't see them, if I call I want to have a long chat and there's lots to catch up on. It's quite difficult to find that kind of slot of time.

*NS You mentioned Amanda had a landline as well. Is that one of the reasons why you would call her more, or is it just -
*PL Definitely, yeah, cos I know I can get hold of her and it won't cost me too much; but she is probably the closest friend out of those girls as well. And she's Vodafone.
*NS Were you better friends before too?
*PL Yeah, cos we were the only 2 boarders out of that group of friends, we were always very close
*NS So it would be difficult to work out why you rang her more...
*PL Yeah. With the boys, definitely, if I want to speak to one of the boys, I think everyone does it with their mobiles as well, I'll ring one of the boys that I know is Vodafone, to get hold of one - or just to see what they're all doing generally. I'll phone, rather than phoning one that I know the best or whatever, I will call say Harry, who's Vodafone, or Charles, who's Vodafone, rather than the others who are One2One, Orange, whatever.
*NS So these are the guys in Jesmond. What sort of things would you do in the evening in the week and at weekends, and how would you arrange it?
*PL Weeks, I'm very boring, not much, watch TV, and we'll probably go to the pub 3 nights a week probably, just if - and normally just for a quick pint or whatever, and I'll see if anyone's up for it in the house first, and then always ring the boys to see if any of them want to come. And then just ring around anyone else. Or if you see people during the day as well. If someone says to you - 'Do you fancy a drink tonight' you're like 'yeah, definitely, give me a ring when you finish your work' or 'give me a ring when you've finished your supper', or, that's generally how it works.
*NS Whereabouts would you go to the pub, would it be locally, or...
*PL Yeah, Jesmond. Belize, Cafe Belize.
*NS Always, is that your local?
*PL Well, what it was is last year we lived on Sanderson Road, which is very close to Belize, and Belize had just opened up, and Brewsters was always so busy, so we wanted to check it out, so we went in there, and it was just always so quiet, so we could always just have a quiet drink with whoever.
*NS And you'd just get the Metro
*PL Walk, just get the Metro, or if I'm only going for one drink or whatever I can drive.
*NS So that's your week.
*PL Weekends, if it's been people's birthdays it's a lot of going out for meals, or in town, and then on to a bar, or just to a bar, and then a lot of house parties, coming back and going to someone's house.
*NS So a lot of house-based socializing. Do you not go clubbing, then?
*PL Used to! In the first year, we used to go to The Boat on Monday night, Legends on Wednesday night, and some weekends, if there's a DJ we all wanna go to, or a night in town, then we will definitely. And then sometimes if we end up really drunk we will end up in

Legends or Sea Bar, or the places like that. But we're getting a bit lazy.
*NS You've mentioned that your workload's increased. How much time is spent working?
*PL A lot of time during the day, and then depending on what deadlines I've got, work in the evenings, a lot of evenings, if I've got stuck into an essay and I'm in the mood I will work through the evening. But [it depends] what seminars I've got to prepare, or if I've got dissertations.
*NS And you've got exams coming up.
*PL Exams in May, June.
*NS Have you got any plans for afterwards?
*PL Not yet, no. I've got no plans. I've got no idea what I'm gonna do.
*NS What else do you do during the day; if you have seminars and lectures at the university, you mentioned perhaps going to the computers, or bumping into other people.
*PL I'll go to the library most days - check emails, or get books out, or sitting there and note, or using the computers, although a lot of the time I do my work here, just because sometimes I find the library a bit too much, too many people. So that's where I bump into people. Or, if I've got a lot of lectures during the day, I will stay and go to the library in between, so I will be in all day. If I've got one lecture in the morning, then I'll go into the library to get my books or whatever I need to do, and then come back, so I bump into people in the library or, in the Union, if I ever go to the Union to get a sandwich to lunch and bump into people. But again, I only do that if I've got lectures all day so that's Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fridays I don't have any lectures; Wednesdays I only have morning lectures.
*NS So it's not too big a workload compared to some students.
*PL It's not too bad, no. It's alright, it's not too difficult.
*NS Can I ask what time you would come home from University if you were there all day?
*PL Between 6, about 6 on average, sometimes a bit earlier. Sometimes a bit later.
*NS And do you eat together in the house?
*PL yeah, generally. We used to quite a lot. We'll all eat together at the same time; sometimes we're cooking different things, just because money-wise it's easier if people want to go and buy their cheap stuff, or depending on whose allowance has just come in and stuff. but then we will once a week or so, sit down and eat the same meal. Someone will cook.
*NS Can I ask you a little bit about money and finances?
*PL yeah
*NS Last year, your rent was £200 per month.
*PL This year it's £55 a week, so it's a bit more
*NS You said you had £400 to live on per month
*PL Yeah
*NS And where does that come from?
*PL Mum and Dad. That's food, bills, everything, including the phone bill, but he pays the rent.
*NS And are you in debt at all?

*PL Yes! I've taken a student loan out every year, and I haven't saved any of it so far, and I'm about £1000 into my overdraft.
*NS It's not TOO bad, actually!
*PL I'm not very good with money; I don't know where it all goes.
*NS Where else does it go, if you could break it down.
*PL I suppose food, bills, and alcohol. If we're not going to the pub and we're not going out we'll still sort of have a bottle of wine with supper or get some beers or something just for the television. You don't realise, but spending £3 or £4 a day on alcohol whatever I'm doing.
*NS SO that would be every night?
*PL Yeah. Even if it's just one glass of wine.
*NS How does that get arranged - do you have wine hanging around the house, or -
*PL Somebody goes to Tesco's or to Spar there, to get food or whatever, they'll be like, is anyone up for having a bottle of wine, they'll just have a bottle of wine...or if we've got some in for a particular night and there's some left over. Or we'll just go to the offy [off licence] and get a few beers if we fancy it.
*NS Do you tend to drink quite a bit if you go out, clubbing and stuff?
*PL Yeah, definitely. Just get carried away. Big nights on alcohol. And then if you're going to go to a house party you have to take alcohol with you, you've got to take a bottle of vodka or whatever you want to take along. I guess a lot of money does go on alcohol, definitely.
*NS Do you do other things socially besides go out to bars and clubs and for meals?
*PL Yeah, people will pop over here in the afternoons, and just come over and chat, even if it's just for a cup of tea or for lunch, just to - videos, people come and watch videos. Cinema, I'm trying to think - there must be other things!
*NS It does sound really social, or sociable. Having people round and stuff. Are there other people besides the 2 houses that we've got here, around the university that you would socialize with?
*PL yeah, yeah
*NS Are they part of the same big group?
*PL Yeah, they would know everybody. That's the closest group of friends [who we've spoken about] and 2 other boys who live in another house that are just as close as those boys. And further afield there's another set of girls, another set of boys.
*NS So when you tend to go out for a quick drink, how many people will be there?
*PL It depends. Sometimes we can go along just the two of us from this house, and 2 of the boys, and that'll be it. The others will, say, go for a drink at 6, and come home and that'll be it, then the other people will have chosen to go after supper. And the most in one night, the people who'd go to the pub is about 20 of us in the pub.
*NS And you mentioned the mode you would contact other people would be calling one of them on their mobile from one of you that was on the same network.

*PL Yeah
*NS Is there not a landline?
*PL The boys don't have a landline. Not many people have landlines, actually. We're actually thinking of cutting it off, because last year we were on Mercury and they did pin codes, so that every time you were making a call you had your own pin code, so the bill comes and it's actually...but they don't do that anymore, so we're on BT, and so you just can't keep track of calls, and our landline bill came to £200 last quarter, and we went through all the bills and tried to identify our numbers, and we could only account for £100 of the calls. We're just gonna cut it. That's why no one else has got landlines, just cos it's impossible. It's so tempting to pick it up cos you know the bill's not coming directly to you. So we're one of the few houses that do have a landline, so it is mostly mobile contact.
*NS So your landline bills would be bigger because you're calling to other mobiles?
*PL Mmm. Cos if I'm thinking, I'm not on my free minutes and I need to call a mobile, I'll call on that phone (fixed) cos I think it's cheaper than calling from my mobile. It's still expensive.
*NS Do you use text messaging at all?
*PL Lots, yeah. When I phoned up Vodafone actually, when they went through my bill - cos I got to the stage it was so big I wanted to try and change tariff or whatever - and she went through and said the majority of my bill was on text messaging. Just because I guess when I'm in university, and I want to see someone quickly, or if someone's in the library and I don't know exactly where they are and I need to find them for whatever reason, a quick text saying 'oh where are you' is gonna cost me 10p whereas to call to one2one is gonna cost me 50p. I'll do this. But then I get caught up in a text message conversation. So by the end of the 5 minutes I've sent 6 text messages, and that's in one afternoon or one 5 minutes. So on average if you send 10 text messages a day, that's a pound a day. And so I think - yeah. It's quite clever the way they do that though, cos it makes you think it's the cheapest way of doing it.
*NS You think it's a conspiracy?
*PL Definitely.
*NS I don't think they thought it would be so popular - it's interesting you would use it as this tracking device.
*PL Or a quick text when you can't be bothered to call someone, or you haven't got time, just to say 'I'll call you tomorrow' or whatever. Just a quick - they're quite useful in that way.
*NS Do you text anybody more than other people?
*PL yeah, my closest friends definitely I text more; just silly little things, irrelevant pieces of information, or just a quick joke, or to find where they are, I guess. I wouldn't send them to people I don't know so well.
*NS So what's the majority - the location thing, or is it the random text messaging?
*PL Location AND random text messages. During the day definitely location, what people are up to. If I'm with people - Stephen, I text him a lot as well, just with little

bits and pieces, nothing...
*NS Could you give me an example?
*PL We have this joke with a lot of us up here, of sort of 'random facts'. So 'did you know that it would take the Niagara Falls 10 minutes to fill up the Millennium Dome' or something like that. And every time someone hears a new one, it's sent round on text messages, to make people laugh. Or if you've seen something in a magazine, about someone, you know someone, my friend's really into the Backstreet Boys (laughs), so if you see something in a magazine about something they've done, or you've seen them on TV, just a quick text, you know.
*NS What about your boyfriend, is it different with him? Are they repeatable?
*PL Yeah, there's stuff like, if I'm out and about and I'm thinking 'I'm missing you' or 'this is what I'm up to', 'off to the pub' quickly, just to let him know what I'm doing, stuff like that. So those kind of text messages.
*NS Is there anyone else who you'd text message who's not up at university?
*PL Tara, Amanda and the boys as well, cos if I think it's going to be too expensive to ring them, I will text them saying 'Sorry I haven't been in touch, what are you up to?' just to see how their term's going, that kind of thing, so yeah, those guys.
*NS Can I ask about your family actually; I presume you phone them?
*PL Yeah, of course
*NS That's your village in East Sussex - your Dad,
*PL My Mum, an older brother who actually lives in London.
*NS Do you speak to him?
*PL I do speak to him, yeah. He's called Luke. And my sister, Rachel, who's in Swansea.
*NS Is that at Uni, or -
*PL She's working for the Union, so she was at Uni.
*NS How often do you speak to your parents?
*PL I speak to Mum and Dad about once a week. And usually they'll phone me. If I phone them, they'll call me straight back, whether I'm on my landline, or whether I'm on my mobile. Luke, I speak to about once every 2 weeks, and he's Vodafone so I call him after 7 on my mobile to his mobile or to his landline number, or he'll often ring me as well. And Rachel I speak to less - she's on a different network. I'll text her more than I speak to her, actually. She has a tendency to talk quite a lot, so I'd rather not call her quite so often, because I'm likely to be on the phone for a good hour.
*NS How is that a problem if you're on the phone for an hour?
*PL Just because she just goes on and on, and I haven't got a full hour to spare, or it's expensive. I'll call her on her landline, cos she's on Orange.
*NS Do your family call you here to your landline always, or do they ring your mobile?
*PL The landline. It varies; sometimes I'll get a call through on the landline, and they won't have tried my mobile. And then sometimes, they'll call through on my mobile and they won't have tried the landline. I don't really know how they work it. But when I'm not at Uni

they obviously always call my mobile.
*NS How long would a conversation tend to last if they called you?
*PL About 20 minutes. Dad will actually often, if he's driving around on business - he travels quite a lot - and he's bored in the car, he'll often call me on my mobile from his mobile, he'll always call my mobile actually, he doesn't have my landline number, it's only Mum. Cos he's got my mobile in his mobile. So he'll call for a quick chat sometimes.
*NS He's a sales manager who travels around the country.
*PL Yeah
*NS Does he text message you yet, or...
*PL I text him, and he's trying to learn, but he's not particularly good. And Mum hasn't got a mobile at all, she has no idea.
*NS Is there anybody else you communicate with by phone or spend time socially with?
*PL There's a girl up here called Ros who isn't friends with any of my friends, cos she's in the year below. She's been my best friend since I was born - her father's my Godfather. I've never been to school with her, she's not involved in any of my friends, she's completely independent, and she's up here so I'll often text or phone her. We meet up once every 2 weeks.
*NS SO would you go out to the pub with her?
*PL We go out, yeah. I went out for lunch with her on Saturday. Or she'll come here for supper or something. Or I'll go over to hers and sit with her and watch TV and stuff.
*NS Is she in Jesmond?
*PL Yeah.
*NS Do you have your mobile with you?
*PL I'll just pop up and get it it's just upstairs.
*NS I haven't seen one of those! [It's the new Nokia.]
*PL It's quite new.
*NS When did you get this then?
*PL I got that in January. I had the - what's the other one, the one before this, the 3210. I had that, and my battery was always dying, and things like that, and I was off contract with Vodafone, so I rang them and I said that, well I'd gone into the shop and said can I upgrade, because the battery on my old phone is so bad, and they said I'd have to pay. But because my bills were so big and stuff I wasn't prepared to , so I phoned Vodafone and said, cos I was off contract, I threatened that I was going to leave Vodafone if they didn't give me a free upgrade.
*NS You're their most lucrative customer!
*PL Yeah, exactly. So they gave me a free upgrade and free accessories and stuff.
*NS So when you were off contract, does that mean you were without a phone.
*PL No, I'd signed a year's contract and then it ended, and you can still be with Vodafone but you don't have to - it means that if I wanted to leave Vodafone, I could have done at any time. It's quite nice. But once I got that free upgrade I had to sign another year's contract. So now I can't just leave, I'm bound to them for another year.
*NS How much do you pay for your free minutes?
*PL I get 500 free minutes a month, and my line rental's about £12 a month.
*NS So did you choose to get this 3310?
*PL Yeah.
*NS It's really nice.

*PL It is nice. It vibrates as well.
*NS Has it got the same covers on that it came with?
*PL Yeah, this is the same cover. But my friend's just got one with a light blue cover, so you can get different colours but I haven't changed it, not yet. It's quite sweet.
*NS So did they offer it to you or did you ask for it?
*PL I wanted that one, yeah. But actually, it was cheaper than - if I was going to have to pay, it was only gonna - it's nearly free now - £10, £20. It's not one of those really expensive ones. I just quite liked it.
*NS Well I haven't interviewed a student with one of those yet, so I'm presuming they're still not that common like the 3210?
*PL It's quite new, so I suppose it'll be common in a year or so, it'll be the one that everyone has.
*NS And what was it that attracted you to this type of phone?
*PL It's just, I don't know - I like the colour, I like the size. Cos I don't like too small phones, cos I would just lose it. And I like Nokia phones, cos I just think I'm so used to the other one, I find it quite easy to work your way round it. So I wanted to stick with Nokia, and it was - obviously didn't want a really small one or a too expensive one, so I just went for that one.
*NS Does that have predictive text messaging?
*PL Oh yeah, exactly, I love that.
*NS Saves quite a lot of time
*PL Exactly. It's brilliant, that. And it's actually got voice-activated ringing, so if I want to call Tamara I just say 'Tamara' and it'll ring her phone.
*NS But it didn't then?
*PL No, you have to go onto the right service. And it's got good games and stuff.
*NS What games has it got?
*PL It's got Snake 2, and it's got Space Impact which is a little shooting game.
*NS Like Space Invaders?
*PL Yeah, so that's quite fun,
*NS So you spend quite a lot of time playing the games?
*PL I've got bored of them now. I do. And now and again I do still. I'm not one of those people who don't play it at all. I'm not like the boys, who constantly play their games.
*NS Do they really?
*PL Yeah, the boys play...they're addicted to, now Space Impact, they love. It used to be Snake, and everyone tried to get their top scores.
*NS Can I ask who's in your phone memory, do you know how many?
*PL I think it's about, I can get 50, I think. I think it's 50 - and it's all these people, not only, their mobiles and their home numbers. And other people around university that I would ring to meet up with as well as closer friends. And family. And yeah, that's about it, I guess.
*NS Do you see anybody from your course, or is it a bit different with it being Combined Studies and having different modules?
*PL Yeah, a lot of my friends are on my course and yeah, I do. The people - I think, the way it's worked for me is that I've met my friends in Halls, and through other people. And then they've either happened to be in some of my modules, or in some of my lectures, or not. I generally haven't met people just from being on a course. I'm trying to think now. Some people I do know just from my course, but not particularly well.
*NS But you still socialize with them at times?
*PL Yeah, definitely, if I see them and stuff.
*NS Is there - Combined Studies, which Faculty is it?
*PL You can do a BA or a BSc, so I'm doing a BA, with Classics, Sociology and Social Policy, and Psychology.
*NS Is there a social base for you on campus?

*PL No, not at all. The most social place I ever go to is the library, which is ridiculous isn't it. That's where everyone is.
*NS What was it like then when you were starting your first course? I suppose in Psychology there maybe was somewhere.
*PL There is sort of a common room, like there is in Sociology. But my lectures in the first year were in the Medical School, and I guess the place in the first year where everyone congregated when we were first meeting people was in the Union. Because you'd go to your lectures and you wouldn't really hang around in the lecture halls or anywhere around, you'd go straight to the Union, up to the Global cafe, up at the top, get something to eat or whatever, and there are sofas, and that's where we'd all sit until you're ready to go to your next lecture. I don't do that so much anymore, just cos people don't really hang around during lectures, they go to the library or they go home.
*NS So when, for example, you were attending seminars in Sociology, did you know people within those groups?
*PL NO, not necessarily. I knew some of them but know, not all of them. I wouldn't know everyone is one of my lectures at all.
*NS It sounds strange to me, but it probably isn't , cos that's the way you lived it. I know some departments are like that, and some aren't. Some people have a strong social base and go out on pub-crawls with their dept, but I guess -
*PL The other thing is, being Combined as well, you're in and out of so many different lectures, that you don't really...Hannah is in Sociology and Social Policy, she's just doing it straight, and there's lots of people from the course, and because she's with them, every lecture she goes to she's with the same people. Whereas for me doing Combined, I'm not, because it's not just 2 different departments, it's 3. So it's just different people every lecture I go to.
*NS So is this why they're not so close friends?
*PL I don't see them enough, I guess.
*NS But you still do see them
*PL Yeah, definitely.
*NS Do you phone them about stuff?
*PL About work, yeah. A lot - in my Classics, it's hard to explain, in my Classics lectures I know at least, there are 5 people in my Classics that I would call about essays and stuff. So in those lectures I'll know about 5 or 6 people, in my Sociology lectures I'll know about 8of them, and of course will talk to them when I see them, but they're actually also friends outside of the department as well. I think I knew them vaguely from people knowing people, and then I've got to know them because they're also on my course, so I see them every day. I'd been introduced to them before, and then got to know them properly because I see them in lectures.
*NS Do you ring them on mobiles or landlines?
*PL I don't know their landlines. Always will ring mobiles. Because, normally, during the day, it's just easier to have someone's mobile cos you know it's always on them, and if you need them during the day or if you want to meet up and get some notes off the or whatever, it's just much easier to call their mobile or text them.
*NS Does everyone in this house have a mobile?
*PL yeah
*NS Is there anybody you know who doesn't have one, apart from Amanda?
*PL Andie's only just got a mobile, literally in the last 2 months. The majority do, definitely.
*NS How do you contact the people who haven't got mobiles?
*PL Through people that I knew they'd be with, on their mobiles.
*NS IS there a particular social space in the house?
*PL Yeah, in here. [has table, sofas etc, high ceiling, fireplace, hatch into kitchen.] That's a bedroom [across the hall] and there's a kitchen. We eat at this table.

*NS And what about Halls, which were you in?
*PL Castle Leazes.
*NS So there were social spaces there...
*PL Yeah, the bar, which was next to the dining room, so you'd always bump into people in the dining room and sit with them for supper, and then go into the bar and have a drink.
*NS You don't have a job?
*PL No.
*NS Do you work in the holidays at all?
*PL Yeah, a few weeks here and there, whatever I can get. Just to get some money.
*NS Is there any particular place in the Uni where you would ring people from on your mobile, or is it just wherever you happen to be?
*PL Wherever I happen to be, normally walking places. From a lecture to the library, from a lecture to the Union, that's usually the place. I wouldn't go to a certain place to make a phone call. Unless I'm in the library, in which case I'd go to the loos, or something.
*NS How is your use in the library regulated?
*PL We're meant to turn it off, but I put it on silent or discreet, because if it rings, or I need to speak to someone then I'll run to the nearest loo, mainly, or the staircase area. If I'm downstairs and I'm near the phone area then I will go to there, but I won't go from upstairs to there.
*NS It doesn't seem that that many people tend to use that, even when it's freezing outside people will be outside on their mobiles.
*PL Yeah. In the cafe as well, in the cafe I'll use the phone.
*NS Do you know anyone else who lives around this area?
*PL NO
*NS Do you know your neighbours?
*PL Yeah, we know those neighbours, we had supper with them last term. That was really nice.
*NS Are they students?
*PL No, they're a doctor, and I don't know what the wife does.
*NS So they introduced themselves to you, or vice versa?
*PL We went to them when we moved in, knocked on the door and introduced ourselves. And then they put a letter through the door inviting us round. We haven't invited them back yet, and it's a bit late now as well.
*NS Who's the first person you normally talk to in the day?
*PL Either, normally Hannah, because she gets up and has to wake me up! Or Andie, she'll wake me up as well. Cos I have all my lectures with Andie and some of them with Hannah, and they get up and come in and wake me up.
*NS SO you're really bad at getting up in the morning.
*PL Quite bad, although sometimes it works the other way round, so if I'm up and no one's come into my room, I'll go out and wake Hannah up.
*NS Do you have an alarm clock?
*PL On my phone. I put it on all the time, but I always turn it off. I'm not that bad...I have phases. At the moment, I'm finding it very difficult to get up. But a while ago I was up by 8 every morning.
*NS Are you going to bed late then?
*PL No, this is odd at the moment. I'm going to bed between 11 and 12 every night. I'm just getting tired.
*NS It's the third year. Do you walk into Uni?
*PL Get the Metro.
*NS And how do you get home?
*PL Metro.
*NS So you wouldn't walk home by yourself.
*PL No, but if we get off that side you just walk around.
*NS Do you get the Metro from Haymarket?

*PL Or Jesmond, if I'm in the library. It depends on my lectures. If I've had a Social Policy lecture, I'll go to Jesmond. If I'm in the Classics dept or the Union I'll go from Haymarket.
*NS Do you cut past the church to go to the Metro station?
*PL Underneath the flyover thing, yeah.
*NS Can we go back to when you got your first phone. That was before starting Uni, so you're now on your 3rd phone?
*PL It's actually my fourth, cos when I was still at school, Dad for some reason got given a free mobile, and cos I'd started driving to school he wanted me to have a phone, so he gave me that. I never used it, cos no one else had mobiles, and I just had no use for it, so it just sat in my car. And then I went travelling, so I didn't use it. And then I got back, and just before I came to University I got my own phone, so it wasn't under my Dad it was mine.
*NS Was that Vodafone?
*PL Yeah.
*NS Why did you decide to get one?
*PL Just because I knew it would be useful at university, I think. I just wanted one. And by that stage everyone was having one, and it was the easiest way to get hold of people. I'd got back from my gap year, and had started using the old one that I did have, and suddenly realised that other people had them, and it was actually really useful. So then I wanted my own.
*NS Had you seen Castle Leazes before you moved there?
*PL No, I'd seen the prospectus and that was it.
*NS So you didn't know about the payphones...
*PL No, I didn't know at all. Actually, when I got there, I mean, they're terrible. There are about 4 payphones split for about 400 people. And one incoming line every other floor.
*NS So you got that, did you have a Nokia phone then?
*PL Yeah, it was Nokia. It was the one before the 3210.
*NS SO basically you've been upgrading every year.
*PL Yeah, Nokias.
*NS Why Vodafone?
*PL I don't know! The phone that my Dad gave me was Vodafone, and actually, when I got it before going to university, I wasn't really aware of all the different networks. I went into town and saw Vodafone and almost presumed I'd get it. I didn't really understand the whole different network thing, so I just went in and got it, didn't really contemplate any other networks at all.
*NS What was the most important factor to consider when buying your phone, if you weren't bothered about networks?
*PL The price of the actual phone, I think.
*NS Has that changed?
*PL Now, definitely tariffs and the deals you can get, looking into - when I was off my contract I did think of changing networks, but obviously I couldn't because I knew I have to be on the same network of Stephen, so there was no real consideration. But obviously always sort of looking at my other friends' deals, and their free minutes or what they get on One2One, say...those kind of things, definitely the most important.
*NS Are style and fashion important to you?
*PL Fairly, yeah. I'm more comfortable in my own style than the catwalk look kind of thing, the real designer stuff. My clothes aren't that expensive, but I like them to look stylish, yeah.
*NS How important is it that your phone would look good?
*PL I don't know, cos I'd like to say it's not really that important, but then having said that, I wouldn't like to have a big, ugly phone. But whether that's the look or the actual - I suppose it is fairly important that I've got, that it looks fairly nice. I suppose it is, if I'm honest.

*NS Have you heard of WAP at all?
*PL Is that the internet phones?
*NS Yeah. Would you be interested in using anything like that?
*PL No way. I don't see the point. They're really expensive, aren't they, WAP phones, I think. And I don't understand how on a little screen like that it can really do you much good. But I probably don't know enough about them. I'm not very good with technical stuff.
*NS When you answered the questionnaire, I think there had been some adverse publicity but you mentioned that you were worried about 'brain damage'. Is that still an issue?
*PL Definitely. I still think about it. Cos I do spend a lot of time on the phone, mainly because of Stephen. And my Mum's mentioned it as well. I do. But then I keep thinking it's not definitely proven yet, is it?
*NS It's inconclusive - it's not been proven it does anything bad, but children are being recommended to not have them when they're growing.
*PL It's not always on my mind, but sometimes, if I've got a headache I'll sometimes think 'I wonder if that is anything to do with the phone.' Other than that, it's not, it's put to the back of my mind. It's not gonna stop me using my phone, basically.
*NS Does the cost of calling ever limit your use?
*PL Yes. I suppose it didn't use to, which it why my bills got so big, but now I'm so aware of my bills, just because I can't afford having £150-200 of my allowance going to my phone, so I do think about the time of day I'm calling, or the length. If I do make a call during the day to another network I try and keep it really quick, so yeah it does affect my use.
*NS Does the cost of calling your mobile affect how others call you, do you know? Does anyone refuse to call you on your mobile?
*PL The people that do, definitely, all of us are really aware of it, because being students, you are just using it just for silly reasons, to get hold of people. Everyone is aware about ringing other people during the day unless they're on the same network. It never really stops people. I mean, if I'm in university and I need to get hold of someone, I'll still make a call. I think it's the same for everyone.
*NS Is it necessary for you to have a mobile phone?
*PL No, but without it, I think I would be - it's strange, if someone took it away from me...I think it is actually necessary that I have one, because of Stephen. Although, if he had a landline then it wouldn't me. It's difficult. I would be able to...we did it 3 years ago, didn't we, so it's not really necessary, no...but I'd be lost without it, basically.
*NS Do you chat when you're on the phone?
*PL Yeah.
*NS What do you chat about?
*PL What I've been up to, any funny stories, funny nights. What other people have been up to, if there's any news or gossip, I guess.
*NS What would you say constitutes 'gossip'?
*PL I'm trying to think - if I've gone out, and someone else hasn't, say from this house, and they'll...or not from this house, cos they'll come back here...when I'm on the phone to someone that hasn't been out and they ask me about the night, then I'll say what people have been up to, if there's someone that's particularly drunk and done an embarrassing thing, I'll talk about that, those kind of things. What my plans are over the next few days, in the evening.
*NS When you're on the phone, do you ever think about the person on the other end - where they are, what they look like or anything?
*PL I think about where they are, cos I tend to always ask someone 'where are you?'; one of the first questions, especially on a mobile, if I am on a mobile. mainly where they are and what they're doing.
*NS But you envisage the person?
*PL Yeah, yeah

*NS Why do you think you have to ask where they are?
*PL Because being on a mobile, if it's a place where it's difficult for them to speak, then I'll want to know. If I phone Stephen, he's the main example - he'll always pick up the phone and I'll say 'where are you', cos if he's in the sitting room, or if he's at someone else's house, or if he's in the pub having a drink, then it's not the time to have a conversation. So that's why.
*NS What happens when you stay in the parental home in your holidays?
*PL I try to use the landline much more. But my phone's always on still at home, but I won't have it on me - I'll leave it in my room. If it rings, I won't answer obviously, and then people will probably try and - cos most of the time they'll know I'm home - then they'll try my landline
*NS And who would you call when you're at home?
*PL Call my friends that I haven't been in touch with during termtime, cos it's been too expensive to call them. I can catch up with them as soon as I get home.
*NS And would you try and maintain relationships with people from Uni?
*PL yeah, I speak to a lot of them, especially the girls I live with, I speak to them a lot in the holidays.
*NS So you would chat for 10, 20 minutes?
*PL Yeah
*NS So you'd be on the phone for quite a lot of time?
*PL I get a lot of grief from my parents.
*NS Is there anywhere that you don't take your mobile phone?
*PL If I'm going out, and I know I'm going to a club, or it's a big night, or something like that, I won't take it. Just cos I don't want it with me, and I could lose it, and it could get stolen, those kind of times. Otherwise I will, and I'll put it on silent. So say if I'm going to the cinema, if I'm going to people's houses for lunch where I don't need it, I'll definitely take it with me cos I might want it after I've put it on silent.
*NS What about when you're in the house here?
*PL Normally I keep it in my room, but actually I do, if I come downstairs to watch TV or whatever I'll bring it with me. It's normally be with me everywhere I go.
*NS And you said you keep it in your bag...
*PL Yeah, I'll keep it in my bag. Sometimes I'll leave it upstairs if it's got to charge, then I'll leave it upstairs, or if I forget to bring it downstairs. But I'll normally click that I haven't got it with me and I'll go and get it.
*NS So you sense that you haven't got it?
*PL Yeah. I think that's mainly, as well, because I guess of Stephen - I blame it all on him! Cos I don't know when he's gonna call me; I don't know what he's doing day to day, I don't know when I'm gonna be able to get hold of him, so it's useful to have it on me at all times.
*NS But if you had a 9 to 5 job, then you would know where he was, or would it...
*PL Yeah, and then I wouldn't have to have it on me all the time. Cos I'd know he wasn't gonna call anyway.
*NS What sort of ring do you have?
*PL I have just a normal ring. But then I have personal rings for some people - he's got a personal ring, the girls in the house have got a personal ring.
*NS Does that work?
*PL yeah. So then I know when it rings if it's him, or Hannah, or whatever, cos I can recognize their personal ring.
*NS How does that make you feel - do you think 'oh good it's such&such?', or -

*PL Yeah! Yeah - 'oh!' Rather than looking to see who the number is, you don't have to say 'oh, I wonder who that is', you know immediately, as soon as it rings.
*NS Is that a bonus of the phone?
*PL I think so, yeah. I think it's definitely a gimmick as well, I don't think it's that necessary. But definitely useful.
*NS And do you ever use that to not speak to somebody?
*PL No, cos all the people that I give special rings to are the people that call me a lot and therefore very close friends, not that I'd tend to ignore just normal rings.
*NS So when you say it's a normal ring, is it one of the ones -
*PL Yeah, it's just ring-ring
*NS So you haven't got a downloaded ring, you're not interested in doing that?
*PL No, no.
*NS What do you think of other people's rings?
*PL Some of them very annoying! I prefer, generally, just to have a normal ring, a normal phone ring. Having said that, I know some of my aren't, but that's for a reason. It's not...I hate constantly having every phone call coming in on one tune, I find that a bit irritating. It's like Trigger Happy TV, that one - [she sings 'Nokia Tune'] And I think it also draws more attention to your phone, if you've got a little tune playing, rather than just a normal ring.
*NS Is that a bad thing?
*PL I don't know, I think in some places yeah. if you're in a public place or whatever, it's less discreet than just a normal ring, I think. Or a train, definitely, it's much nicer if your mobile phone's gonna go off, to hear just a normal ring, than a whole tune in the carriage.
*NS What do you think about the library ban; you mentioned you were glad that phones were prohibited, and you didn't think they should be banned elsewhere...
*PL Did I say that? (laughs) I'm sure I could think of other places where they should be banned. Definitely places like libraries, theatres, cinemas, to a certain extent certain restaurants, perhaps if it's a smart, evening restaurant or whatever. But I mean, other places, I think it's fine. I think people have just got to accept that places like trains, shops, I don't think they should be banned in those places.
*NS Do you think there should be any formalised rules in places like restaurants, whatever, that you mentioned?
*PL I think perhaps, in restaurants, what they could do is encourage people to put them on discreet or silent, so you can tell it's going off, and you're quite allowed to pick it up while you're at the table and speak, cos you're with people, you're in your own company, so you can choose. And then you're not disturbing anyone else. So you can still use them, but you're not having a ring that's gonna disturb everyone else in the restaurant. So perhaps not banning them totally, but banning the rings.
*NS Do you have Voicemail or some form of answering service?
*PL No. I don't. I cancelled it, because you have to pay with Vodafone, to listen to your messages. I've tried everything to cut down the cost, so I don't have any.
*NS Does anyone ever get aggravated if they can't get hold of you, or do you always answer the phone?
*PL I don't think so, I don't always answer the phone, and it doesn't annoy people. Normally, if I see a missed call, I'll try and get back to them, so it kind of works in that way. Or they'll just try again. because when I had Voicemail my Mum would leave 5 minute messages, and it was more annoying than just having a missed call from her.
*NS You said you have a PC and you work from home, but you don't like using computers?

*PL I'm not very computer literate. I can do Word, but I'm not the best on computers. I wouldn't be able to cope in a computer-based company. I'm not very good with them, basically.
*NS But you send email sometimes?
*PL yeah, I can do email, I can do all of that, I can do Word, but I can't do the more complex stuff - I can't program or any of that stuff.
*NS So are you still making 30 calls a week?
*PL I suppose I still am. I probably am - quick ones. I've cut down on the length of time I spend on them. But I still make them.
*NS You said that you agreed that mobiles were addictive...
*PL Psychologically, in a sense that, like I said, if I didn't have it, I'd be lost without it. Otherwise I'd be - once you're using one, it's very hard to think of your life without one. That's a bit dramatic, but...whereas if you'd never had one, you don't think [about it] but when you've got one you totally see the advantages, and therefore they're hard to give up.
END

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Who do you live with, in the University and at home?

Has this changed since last year?

If so, why are you living with the people you're living with now?

How did you meet them?

Why did you choose to live there?

Do you have a local nearby or somewhere where you socialize not in Uni or town?

How many of you are there here, how many with mobiles?

How many rooms?

Where is the landline located?

Do you ever have problems accessing the landline because someone else is using it?

Do you socialize in a particular room in the house?

Was there social space in halls?

Are you friendly with people on your course (what is your course?)

How many people are on your course?

What about old friends from school, do you keep in touch with them?

Did anyone at home have a mobile phone?

Did you go to a mixed school?

Tell me about your job.

Do you socialize with people from work?

Who's in your mobile phone book?

Is there anyone without a mobile that you know?

Does this affect your relationship with them?

Who do you speak to and how often out of these people.

When do you speak to them & for how long Where would you phone them from

When would you use different types of phone/text message/email etc

Do you have the same kind of conversations on your mobile that you have on a landline?

What do you do socially in the week and at weekends?

Has this changed since last year?

What part does your mobile phone play in this?

How much socializing takes place at the University?

What do you do in your social life?

How do you get on with your neighbours?

Do you ever have spare time between lectures, seminars etc? If so, how do you spend this time?

How much time does your degree take up in your life?

What hours do you do?

Could you take me through a typical weekday, and a typical weekend?

Is there a common room in your dept? Do you spend much time there?

Do you have any other hobbies?

Who is the first person you normally talk to in the day?

Could you live without your phone?

Do you speak to people face to face more, less or the same since you had a mobile?

How many people do you go out with when you go out?

Do you ever walk home by yourself?

If so, from where, where to, how often?

Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend...have you at some point in the past, and what was it like communicating on the phone with them?

Do the people you know in Newcastle have landlines in their houses?

How important is communication in your life?

How would you organize a night out, or be involved in a night out organized by someone else?

Do you see any of the people that you live with during the day at Uni?

Is this coincidental or pre-arranged?

**BUYING THE PHONE**

Why did you get the phone at this time? [if in the 1st year]

Why not before; did anyone else have phones before you came to the University, i.e. school friends or people at home?

[if a gift from someone] did you ask for this particular gift?[if not] why did they buy it for you? did you have any choice in the phone and network?

Did you parents say anything about you getting a mobile phone?

What was the most important factor to consider when buying your phone

Are style and fashion important to you in terms of clothing, cosmetics, etc?

How important is it that your phone 'looks good'

What would you say to people who call it a fashion accessory or status symbol?

Do you think people *will continue* to use mobile phones or are they just a phase?

Have you heard of WAP, what is it? Do you plan to get it?

What else do you spend your money on? Are you good at controlling your finances?

**USING THE PHONE**

Has your use changed? [it may have then, and since then]

What facilities does your phone have, and which do you use?

What's the best thing about it?

Health/safety concerns – tell me about these

Does the cost of calling ever limit your use?

Does the cost affect who calls you and how long they are on the phone?

Do your friends, family etc tend to call you on the mobile or the landline?

Do you ever begin conversations on a mobile and then change to a landline for reasons of cost?

Do you use a landline to make calls? If so, when would you use the landline and when would you use the mobile?

Why do you text message? What would you do without it? How different is text messaging from email (if it is different at all)?

Why do you think it is so popular, and amongst students in particular?

Do you ever think about how others perceive you when you use the phone?

Games – do you and if so why?

Do you ever call people or text them because you feel bored?

Would you describe yourself as a light, medium or heavy user?

What would you say an 'excessive' number of calls/messages is? Does anyone you know make this many calls?

Is it necessary for you to have a mobile at this time?

Would you definite a mobile as a necessity, a luxury, or neither [explain why]

Is it necessary for most students?

Is it more or less necessary than if you were in a 9-5 job?

Do you think you would use one for a job in the future?

Do you ever chat on the phone, whether on the landline or mobile?

How long for?

What do you 'chat' about?

Are there some people you chat with more than others?

Would you ever consider getting rid of the landline and use mobile only?

When you're on the phone, do you ever think about where the person on the other end is located, what they look like etc?

Is there anywhere you don't take your mobile?

Where do you keep it when you're in the house?

When you are staying in the parental home, does your phone use change?

Would you say you were good at communicating by phone?

What are your friends like at communicating by phone?

How much time per day would you say you spend on the phone? [mobile/landline]

When and where do you email? How much time do you spend on email/internet?

Have you observed any differences in the types of calls made by men/women on the mobile

**SOUND**

What ring do you have on your phone? Is it important to you, do you identify with it?

What do you think of other people's rings?

**PLACES**

Any prohibited places. Why is this so important.

Do you think there should be formalised rules?

Can you describe any informal rules you know exist?

Why do you have your phone switched off in these places?

Do you carry your mobile with you everywhere?

Where do you keep your mobile when you are at home?

Rudeness – could you describe any situations where you have observed 'rude' phone use?

Have you ever been embarrassed about using your phone in public?

Why should phones be used/banned in certain spaces?

Do you know of any informal rules that people employ in these spaces? Do you employ any of these methods?

Could you give me an example of.....

Have you ever been out with a friend and their mobile rings and they answer it...how does this make you feel?

**AVAILABILITY**

Do you always have your phone switched on [apart from certain places]

How do you feel about being available 24-7 in all places?

Has this changed your life in any way?

Who do you give your mobile number to or not?

Do you ever see who's calling and decided not to answer it.

Do you have voicemail?

Do you ever text people rather than talk to them

**PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE MOBILES – EXTRA**

Are you thinking of getting a mobile at some point?

Do you think you'd get one when you got a job?

How much is your landline bill, rental and calls?

Do you think this is cheaper than running a mobile phone.

How much did it cost to install etc?

Do you know anybody who does not have a landline in their house?

How do you feel about having to ring them constantly on a mobile?

Do you/have you had a long distance relationship?

Have you ever thought about the advantages and disadvantages a mobile phone might offer in this situation.

Do you not think you might find a mobile useful at all?

Do you know anything about talkplans etc?

Do your friends not encourage you to get a mobile?

Do they ever moan at you for not being available?

Have you ever used anyone else's phone? how did you find it?

Do you drive?

Do you have a phone in your room?

Do you ring other people on their mobiles?

How do you feel about this?

Do you make phone calls at any particular time on the landline?

Have you noticed any change in the way you and your friends communicate now that they have mobiles [and they don't?]

Would any of the promised services on mobile phones encourage you to buy one?

What does your landline handset look like?

Is it digital, cordless?

What sort of package do you have on the rental?

Is it used for internet access at all?

Does anyone else in your house have a mobile?

How many others of your friends?

Where do you keep the numbers of the people you ring?

How many people are in this 'address book'?

Do you find it easy to remember people's mobile numbers?

Is the answering machine facility used much? Do you ever not answer the phone or screen calls?

Do you ever send text messages to mobile phones via the internet?

Do your parents not think it would be better if you had a mobile phone?

Are your parents concerned about your safety?

Do your parents have any problem getting in touch with you when they want to?

What do you do, for example if you are working in the library or reading at home, and feel a bit bored or need a break?

Does anyone ever have a problem getting hold of you because other people are using the landline?

Do you think you would have communicated differently if you had had a mobile phone in halls, rather than relying on a payphone?

# UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE AND BT

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

BT

# Your Views on Mobile Phones

## CONFIDENTIAL

This survey is part of unique research being carried out at Newcastle University to find out **what undergraduates think about mobile phones.**

Your contribution will be greatly valued **whether or not you own a mobile phone.** Each **fully completed** questionnaire will also be entered in the **Prize Draw to win £100.**

Please use the **prepaid** envelope provided to return the questionnaire or, if this has been misplaced, send it by internal mail to Natasha Standen, Department of Social Policy, University of Newcastle.
Thank you for your time.

## GOOD LUCK IN THE £100 PRIZE DRAW!

## SECTION ONE

THIS SECTION MAINLY CONTAINS QUESTIONS ABOUT MOBILE PHONES BUT I WOULD LIKE EVERYBODY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE A MOBILE PHONE. PLEASE PROVIDE AN ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED OR TICK THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER/S.

**1) Do you own a mobile phone?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**2) Do you own any of the following items?**

(Please tick all that apply.)

*Pager* ___

*Games console* ___

*Personal computer (PC/Apple Macintosh)* ___

*Laptop computer* ___

*Handheld computer* ___

*Personal CD, cassette or minidisc player* ___

**3a) Do you know of any other facilities besides phone calls that mobile phones can provide?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**3b) If Yes, please tell me about these:**

**4) Do you approve of the University's policy of prohibiting mobile phone use in the library?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**5a) Are there any other University areas where you think mobile phone use should be prohibited?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**5b) If Yes, please tell me about these:**

**6a) Are there any areas outside the University where you think mobile phone use should be prohibited?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**6b) If Yes, please tell me about these:**

**7) To what extent do you like or dislike using computers?** (Please tick <u>one</u> description only.)

*I really like using computers* ___

*I like using computers* ___

*I neither particularly like nor dislike using computers* ___

*I don't like using computers* ___

*I really don't like using computers* ___

**8) Which of the following do you use for internet and/or email use?**

(Please tick <u>all</u> that apply.)

*University computer* ___

*Own personal computer (PC/Mac)* ___

*Laptop computer* ___

*Handheld computer* ___

*Games console* ___

*Mobile phone* ___

*Other (please say)*_____ ___

## <u>SECTION TWO</u>

**THE QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION ARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE YOU SOCIALIZE WITH AND HOW YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM. BY <u>SOCIALIZE</u>, I MEAN TO TAKE PART IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES WITH OTHERS WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING, E.G. GOING OUT TO A PUB/CLUB/CINEMA, STAYING IN AND WATCHING TV, OR SIMPLY CHATTING OVER COFFEE. PLEASE COULD EVERYONE COMPLETE THIS SECTION, WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE A MOBILE PHONE.**

**9) Which of the following people do you socialize with, and how often?**

(Please tick <u>one</u> space on each line.)

| | *Often* | *Occasionally* | *Never* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *People in a society or sports team* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *People at a place of work* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The Newcastle University students I live with* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Other Newcastle University students* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The people I live with that do not attend Newcastle University* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My immediate family (e.g. parents and siblings)* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My extended family (e.g. cousins, aunts and uncles)* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University but live in the area* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University and live elsewhere* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**10) Which methods do you use to communicate with the people below during termtime when you are not with them? (Please tick all that apply. If you do not have friends in a particular group, please leave that line blank.)**

| | *E-mail* | *Phone* | *Letter* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *People at the society I attend or sports team I belong to* | — | — | — |
| *People at a place of work* | — | — | — |
| *The Newcastle University students I live with* | — | — | — |
| *Other Newcastle University students* | — | — | — |
| *The people I live with that do not attend Newcastle University* | — | — | — |
| *My immediate family (e.g. parents and siblings)* | — | — | — |
| *My extended family (e.g. cousins, aunts and uncles)* | — | — | — |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University but live in the area* | — | — | — |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University and live elsewhere* | — | — | — |

**11) How many of the people you know below own a mobile phone? (Please tick one space for each line. If you do not have friends in a particular group, please leave that line blank.)**

| | *At least half* | *Less than half* | *None* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *People at the society I attend or sports team I belong to* | — | — | — |
| *People at work* | — | — | — |
| *The Newcastle University students I live with* | — | — | — |
| *Other Newcastle University students* | — | — | — |
| *People I live with who do not attend Newcastle University* | — | — | — |
| *My immediate family (e.g. parents and siblings)* | — | — | — |
| *My extended family (e.g. cousins, aunts and uncles)* | — | — | — |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University but live in the area* | — | — | — |
| *People who don't go to Newcastle University and live elsewhere* | — | — | — |

## SECTION THREE

**PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU OWN A MOBILE PHONE. IT IS ABOUT YOUR MOBILE PHONE AND HOW YOU USE IT. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A MOBILE PHONE, PLEASE GO TO SECTION FOUR ON PAGE 7.**

**12) Where did you get your mobile phone from?**

*I bought it* —
*Someone bought it for me* —
*Someone gave me their phone* —
*It was a free gift (ie with a credit card or bank)* —

**13) If you did not buy your mobile phone yourself, who, (e.g. my parents, my girlfriend) or which company provided the phone for you?**

**14) <u>When</u> did you get your mobile phone?**

*Before starting Newcastle University* ___
*In my 1st year at Newcastle University* ___
*In my 2nd year at Newcastle University* ___
*In my 3rd and/or final year at Newcastle University* ___

**15a) Is this the first mobile phone you have had?**

*Yes* ___
*No* ___

**15b) If No, when did you get your first mobile phone?**

*Before starting Newcastle University* ___
*In my 1st year at Newcastle University* ___
*In my 2nd year at Newcastle University* ___
*In my 3rd and/or final year at Newcastle University* ___

**15c) If you have had more than one mobile phone, how many have you had in total?** ___

**16) What mobile phone <u>network</u> are you on?**

**17a) Are any of your friends or family on the same network as you are?**

*Yes* ___
*No* ___
*Don't know* ___

**17b) If Yes, approximately how many?** ___

**18) How is your network's <u>service</u> paid for?**

*Long-term contract - one yearly payment* ___
*Long-term contract – payments made monthly* ___
*'Pay-as-You-Go' cards* ___
*Other (please say)* _____ ___

**19) Who pays for the connection to this network?** (e.g. myself, my parents, my girlfriend):

**20) On what basis are your <u>calls</u> paid?**

*Call allowance included in cost of phone ('free minutes')* ___
*Monthly bills* ___
*'Top-up card'* ___
*Other (please say)* _____ ___

**21) Who pays for these calls?** (e.g. myself, a friend, my boyfriend):

**22a) Please estimate how many calls you made last week on your mobile phone:** ___

**22b) And please tell me whether this number represents::**

*the usual amount of calls I make* ___
*more calls than usual* ___
*less calls than usual* ___

**23a) Please estimate how many calls you received last week on your mobile phone:** ___

**23b) And please tell me whether this number represents :**

*the usual amount of calls I receive* ___
*more calls than usual* ___
*less calls than usual* ___

**24a) Please estimate how much you spent on mobile phone calls last month:** £ ___
(If you only spent your 'free minutes', please write 'zero'.)

**24b) And please tell me whether this number represents:**

*my usual monthly expenditure* ___
*more than my usual monthly expenditure* ___
*less than my usual monthly expenditure* ___

**25) What make of mobile phone do you have?**

**26) What factors affected your choice of mobile phone?** (Please tick all that apply.)

*Make* ___
*Size* ___
*Colour* ___
*Weight* ___
*Overall style* ___
*Cost* ___
*Choice of network* ___
*Another reason (please say)*_____ ___
*None of the above* ___

**27a) Are there any places you go to where you usually have your mobile phone switched off?** *Yes* ___
*No* ___

**27b) If Yes, please tell me about these:**

**28) Where do you usually keep your mobile phone when not using it?**

*Displayed on my person or carried in my hand* ___
*In a bag or pocket where it cannot be seen* ___
*Somewhere else (please say)*_____ ___

**29) What did you expect to use your mobile phone for when you first got it and what do you use it for now?** (Please tick all that apply.)

| | *Expected Use* | *Current Use* |
|---|---|---|
| *To stay in contact with my family* | ___ | ___ |
| *For safety reasons or emergencies* | ___ | ___ |
| *To make social arrangements with my Uni friends* | ___ | ___ |
| *To chat to my Uni friends* | ___ | ___ |
| *To make social arrangements with other friends* | ___ | ___ |
| *To chat to other friends* | ___ | ___ |
| *For my job or caring responsibilities* | ___ | ___ |
| *Voicemail* | ___ | ___ |
| *Sending text messages (SMS)* | ___ | ___ |
| *Creating pictures* | ___ | ___ |
| *Playing games* | ___ | ___ |
| *Sending e-mail/fax* | ___ | ___ |
| *Other (please say)*_____ | ___ | ___ |

**30a) Do you have access to a regular landline phone or payphone where you live?**

*Yes – a regular landline phone* ___

*Yes - a payphone* ___

*No* ___

**30b) If Yes, approximately how many other people do you share this phone with?** ___

**30c) If you have access to a landline, is there an answering machine or messaging service?** *Yes* ___

*No* ___

**30d) If you use both a landline and a mobile phone, do you spend more time on one than the other?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**30e) If Yes, which phone do you mostly use, and why?**

**31a) Do you ever let anyone else use your mobile phone?** (Please tick all that apply.)

*Yes, to make calls* ___

*Yes, to answer calls* ___

*Yes, to share calls* ___

*No* ___

**31b) If Yes, who?** (e.g. my friend, my girlfriend):

**32) What <u>type</u> of calls do you make on the phone?** (Please tick <u>all</u> that apply. By **campus I** mean the grounds and buildings - both academic and social - of the University of Newcastle, **excluding** accommodation areas.)

| | *Mobile* | *Regular phone* | *Payphone* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Calls to inform somebody about news, social or travel arrangements* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls to chat to friends and family* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls which incorporate both information and social chat* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls made when I am off-campus to others off-campus* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls made when I am on-campus to others on-campus* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Off-campus to on-campus calls* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *On-campus to off-campus calls* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**33) Does it annoy you when any of the people below overhear your phone conversations?**

| (Please tick all that apply.) | *Yes, always* | *Yes, sometimes* | *No* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *My parents* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My spouse/the person I live with* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The person I go out with* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My housemates/hallmates* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The general public* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**34a) Is there anything about using a mobile phone that worries you?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**34b) If Yes please tell me about this:**

**<u>SECTION FOUR</u>**

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR NON-OWNERS OF MOBILE PHONES ONLY AND ARE ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOBILE PHONES AND YOUR USE OF LANDLINES. IF YOU OWN A MOBILE PHONE PLEASE GO TO SECTION FIVE ON PAGE 9.**

**35a) Do you have access to a regular landline phone or payphone where you live?**

*Yes - landline phone* ___

*Yes - payphone* ___

*No* ___

**35b) If Yes, approximately how many other people do you share this phone with?** ___

**35c) Does this phone have an answering machine or other messaging service?** *Yes* ___ *No* ___

**36) What <u>type</u> of calls do you make on the phone?** (Please tick <u>all</u> that apply. By **campus** I mean the grounds and buildings (both academic and social) of the University of Newcastle, **excluding** accommodation areas.)

| | *Regular phone* | *Payphone* |
|---|---|---|
| *Calls to inform somebody about news, social or travel arrangements* | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls to chat to friends and family* | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls which incorporate both information and social chat* | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls made when I am off-campus to others off-campus* | ___ | ___ |
| *Calls made when I am on-campus to others on-campus* | ___ | ___ |
| *Off-campus to on-campus calls* | ___ | ___ |
| *On-campus to off-campus calls* | ___ | ___ |

**37) Does it annoy you when any of the people below overhear your phone conversations?**

(Please tick all that apply.)

| | *Yes, always* | *Yes, sometimes* | *No* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *My parents* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My spouse/the person I live with* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The person I go out with* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My housemates/hallmates* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *The general public* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**38) Have you previously owned a mobile phone?** *Yes* ___ *No* ___

**39) Why don't you have a mobile phone?**

*I have no need for one* ___
*They are too expensive* ___
*I'm not comfortable about speaking in public* ___
*I have the use of someone else's* ___
*I'm scared of using one* ___
*I dislike mobile phones* ___
*I don't want to get phone calls all the time* ___
*No particular reason* ___
*Some other reason/s (please say below):* ___

## SECTION FIVE

**THIS SECTION WILL ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF AND IS FOR EVERYBODY TO ANSWER.**

**40) Are you:**

*Female* ___

*Male* ___

**41) How old are you?**

___

**42) Are you:**

*Single* ___

*Living with a partner or married* ___

*Going out with somebody in Newcastle* ___

*Going out with somebody outside of Newcastle* ___

**43a) Do you have any children?**

*Yes* ___

*No* ___

**43b) If Yes, how many?**

___

**44) In which faculty are you registered?**

*Agricultural and Biological Sciences* ___

*Arts* ___

*Education* ___

*Engineering* ___

*Law, Environment and Social Sciences* ___

*Medicine/Dentistry* ___

*Science* ___

**45) What year of your course are you in?**

*The 1st year* ___

*The 2nd year* ___

*The 3rd year and/or final year* ___

**46) Please tell me the usual occupation of the main wage-earner in your family. (By main wage-earner I mean the parent, guardian, spouse or carer earning the highest wage.)**

*Usual occupation of main wage- earner:*

**47) Approximately how much money does your rent cost per month?** £ ___

**48) Approximately how much money do you have to live on per month after rent?** (Please include all sources of income such as money from employment or an overdraft facility.) £ ___

**49) Which of the following groups would you say you belong to?**

*Bangladeshi* ___
*Black Caribbean* ___
*Black African* ___
*Black Other (please say)* _____ ___
*Chinese* ___
*Indian* ___
*Pakistani* ___
*White* ___
*Another group (please say)*_____ ___

**50) Where do you live during termtime?**

*University halls* ___
*Other University accommodation* ___
*Private accommodation* ___
*Other (please say)*_____ ___

**51) <u>Who</u> do you live with during termtime?**

*With my parents* ___
*With my spouse/partner* ___
*With people who were my friends before I moved in with them* ___
*With people I didn't know before I moved in with them* ___
*Alone* ___

**52) What type of educational establishment did you attend before coming to Newcastle University?**

*Sixth form college/tertiary college* ___
*Grammar or high school (not fee paying)* ___
*Comprehensive school* ___
*Public school* ___
*Other fee-paying school* ___
*Other (please say)* _____ ___

**53a) Did you live in the Newcastle area before you began studying for your degree here?** *Yes* ___
*No* ___

**53b) If No, and you lived overseas, which <u>country</u> did you live in before coming to Newcastle?**

**53c) If No, and you lived in Great Britain, which <u>county</u> did you live in before coming to Newcastle?**

**54) Please let me know which area below sounds most like where you lived before starting Newcastle University:**

*City centre* ___

*City suburb* ___

*Town* ___

*Village* ___

*Other rural area* ___

**SECTION 6. THIS FINAL SECTION ASKS FOR YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT MOBILE PHONES AND MOBILE PHONE USERS, AND IS FOR EVERYBODY TO ANSWER.**

**55) Listed below are some opinions that people have expressed about mobile phones and mobile phone users in general. From what you have observed at Newcastle University, to what extent would you agree with these statements?** (Please tick one space on each line.)

| | *Strongly Agree* | *Agree* | *Indifferent* | *Disagree* | *Strongly Disagree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Most mobile phone users are rude* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Most mobile phone users are upper class* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Most mobile phone owners are female* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Most mobile phone users talk too loudly* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones are a nuisance* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones are addictive* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones cost too much* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones waste time* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones help save time* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mobile phones are easy to use* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**56) Please use the space below to add any other views you may have about mobile phones.** (Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary)**:**

If you would like to enter the **£100 CASH PRIZE** draw, please write your email address clearly here so that you can be contacted if you win:

If you are willing to be contacted for **paid follow-up research** on this project please tick here ☐ and write your email address clearly here:

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE

**Department of Social Policy**

Claremont Bridge Building
University of Newcastle
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

Dear Student,

I am a first year PhD student researching 'The Use and Meaning of Mobile Phones in Student Social Networks' in a study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and BT. I am writing to ask you to please complete the enclosed questionnaire which asks about **your views on mobile phones**.

You have been selected from all 17-24 year old undergraduates on the University of Newcastle database using a random sample. A study of university undergraduates and what they think about mobile phones has never been done before, so you will be contributing to a **unique and important** piece of research. I hope therefore I can rely on your help in researching this new and interesting topic, **whether or not you own a mobile phone**. All information provided will remain **confidential**.

In addition, by **returning your fully completed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided** (there is no need for a stamp) you can **win £100** in a prize draw. Just make sure you have answered all the questions applicable to you and write your email address clearly in the space provided so that I can contact you if you are the winner of £100. (Your email address will not be used for any other purpose.)

If you would like to take part in further **paid** research about students and mobile phones, please tick the box at the end of the questionnaire and write your e-mail address in the space provided.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me by emailing Natasha.Standen@ncl.ac.uk or ring me on (0191) 222 5721.

Yours sincerely,

N Standen

Natasha Standen

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE

**Department of Social Policy**

Claremont Bridge Building
University of Newcastle
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

Dear Student,

I recently sent you a questionnaire that asked for **your views on mobile phones.** If you have already returned the questionnaire, thank you very much. If you have not yet replied I would be grateful if you could spare the time to complete it as I would like to hear from as wide a range of undergraduate students as possible. I have enclosed another questionnaire and pre-paid envelope in case you have mislaid the first.

If you return the completed questionnaire by 1 April your entry for the **£100 prize draw** will still be valid. Simply write your email address in the space provided in the questionnaire so I can contact you if you are the winner. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided – it is a **freepost** address so there is no need for a stamp.

If you would like to take part in further **paid** research about students and mobile phones, please tick the box at the end of the questionnaire and write your email address in the space provided.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me by emailing Natasha.Standen@ncl.ac.uk or ring me on (0191 222) 5721.

Yours sincerely,

N. Standen

Natasha Standen

# MOBILE PHONE USER DIARY GUIDELINES

- Please fill in the date and time every time you use your mobile phone.

- Please tick the box to indicate why you used your mobile phone.

1. Please estimate how long you used your mobile phone for at this time, whether making/receiving a call, accessing voicemail, text messaging etc. If text messaging was involved, please state the number of words in the message.

2. Please state where you were when you used your mobile (i.e. in the library, at home, in transit between University and town, etc.)

3. Please state who else was involved when you used your mobile phone and what their relationship is to you (ie sister, housemate, friend from home, boyfriend.)

4. Please state what type of technology the other person involved was using.

5. Please give some description about the topic of the call; why the call was made; what type of call it was; how important it was that the call was made at this time; etc.

6. Please add any other comments about your use of the mobile phone in this instance.

In case of problems, please contact:

Natasha Standen
Newcastle Centre for Family Studies
18 Windsor Terrace
University of Newcastle
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

0191 222 5721

natasha.standen@ncl.ac.uk

# MOBILE PHONE USER DIARY RECORD

DATE: / / 2000 TIME: AM/PM

CALL MADE ☐
CALL RECEIVED ☐
WAP CALL MADE ☐
GAME PLAYED ☐

TEXT MESSAGE SENT ☐
TEXT MESSAGE RECEIVED ☐
VOICEMAIL RETRIEVED ☐
OTHER ☐

1. How long were you using your mobile for?

2. Where were you when you were using your mobile?

3. Who was the call or message from or to?

4. Was the other person involved on - a mobile ☐ a local landline ☐ a national landline ☐ a payphone ☐ the internet ☐

5. Please describe briefly what the call or message was about:

6. Please add any other comments you have about using your mobile in this instance: